

ANNOUNCER: FUNDING FOR
"COUNTRY MUSIC" WAS PROVIDED

BY THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS

OF THE BETTER ANGELS SOCIETY:

THE BLAVATNIK FAMILY FOUNDATION,

THE SCHWARTZ/REISMAN FOUNDATION,

THE PFEIL FOUNDATION,

DIANE AND HAL BRIERLEY,

JOHN AND CATHERINE DEBS,

THE FULLERTON FAMILY
CHARITABLE FUND,

BY THE PERRY AND DONNA
GOLKIN FAMILY FOUNDATION,

JAY ALIX AND UNA JACKMAN,

MERCEDES T. BASS,

AND FRED AND DONNA SEIGEL

AND BY THESE ADDITIONAL MEMBERS.

[BOB WILLIS AND HIS TEXAS
PLAYBOYS' "NEW SAN ANTONIO
ROSE" PLAYING]

WILLIS:

OH, TEAR IT DOWN, MR. MAN.

TEAR IT DOWN NOW.

MAJOR FUNDING WAS PROVIDED
BY: THE ANNENBERG FOUNDATION;

BY THE ARTHUR Vining DAVIS
FOUNDATIONS,

DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING
AMERICA'S FUTURE

THROUGH EDUCATION;

BY BELMONT UNIVERSITY,
WHERE STUDENTS CAN STUDY

MUSIC AND MUSIC BUSINESS
IN THE HEART OF MUSIC CITY;

BY THE SOUNDTRACK OF AMERICA--
MADE IN TENNESSEE--

TRAVEL INFORMATION
AT TNVACATION.COM;

BY THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT
OF NASHVILLE

AND DAVIDSON COUNTY;

BY ROSALIND P. WALTER;

BY THE CORPORATION
FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING;

AND BY VIEWERS LIKE YOU.

THANK YOU.

â„“ HEADING DOWN SOUTH
TO THE LAND OF THE PINE â„“

â„“ THUMBING MY WAY INTO
NORTH CAROLINE â„“

â„“ STARING UP THE ROAD,
PRAY TO GOD I SEE HEADLIGHTS â„“

â„“ SO, ROCK ME, MAMA,
LIKE A WAGON WHEEL â„“

â„“ ROCK ME, MAMA,
ANY WAY YOU FEEL â„“

â„“ HEY, MAMA, ROCK ME

[CHEERING AND APPLAUSE]

[VASSAR CLEMENTS & NITTY
GRITTY DIRT BAND PLAYING
"ORANGE BLOSSOM SPECIAL"]

WOMAN: WHEN I FIRST
MOVED TO NASHVILLE, I WAS 19.

I WAS TOO YOUNG TO WAIT TABLES,
SO I GOT A JOB AS A TOUR GUIDE

AT THE COUNTRY MUSIC
HALL OF FAME.

AND IT TURNED OUT TO BE SUCH
A BLESSING BECAUSE I GOT--

I GOT TO LISTEN
TO SO MUCH MUSIC.

ALL DAY, EVERY DAY,
I GOT TO--

IT WAS MY JOB TO LEARN
THE HISTORY OF COUNTRY MUSIC.

WE HAD THIS PAINTING IN
THE MUSEUM CALLED "THE SOURCES

OF COUNTRY MUSIC," THE LAST
PAINTING OF THOMAS HART BENTON.

I HAD TO TELL
PEOPLE ABOUT IT.

I HUNG OUT WITH
THIS PAINTING A LOT.

LOOKING AT THIS PAINTING
IS LIKE LOOKING AT AN OLD

FRIEND FOR ME.

SO IT SHOWS THE BARN DANCES,
IT SHOWS THE RAILROAD,

RIVERBOATS, THE GOSPEL CHOIRS,
THE LAP DULCIMERS,

AND THE FIDDLERS.

AND IT SHOWS THE COWBOYS AND
THE BANJO COMING FROM AFRICA

AND THE SLAVES, AND HOW
ALL OF THIS CAME TOGETHER.

IT'S JUST A BEAUTIFUL THING
TO LOOK AT BECAUSE IT'S THE--

IT'S THE CLOSEST THING,
VISUALLY, REALLY, TO WHAT

COUNTRY MUSIC SOUNDS LIKE.

IT'S SO COLORFUL. THERE'S
SO MUCH ENERGY IN IT.

NARRATOR: COUNTRY MUSIC
ROSE FROM THE BOTTOM UP,

FROM THE SONGS AMERICANS SANG
TO THEMSELVES IN FARM FIELDS

AND RAILROAD YARDS TO EASE
THEM THROUGH THEIR LABORS

AND SONGS THEY SANG TO
EACH OTHER ON THE PORCHES

AND IN THE PARLORS OF
THEIR HOMES WHEN THE DAY'S

WORK WAS DONE.

IT CAME FROM THE FIDDLE TUNES
THEY DANCED TO

ON SATURDAY NIGHTS
TO LET OFF STEAM

AND FROM THE HYMNS THEY CHANTED
IN CHURCH ON SUNDAY MORNINGS.

IT FILTERED OUT OF SECLUDED
HOLLOWES DEEP IN THE MOUNTAINS

AND FROM SMOKY SALOONS ON THE
EDGE OF TOWN, FROM THE BARRIOS

ALONG THE SOUTHERN BORDER,
AND FROM THE WIDE-OPEN SPACES

OF THE WESTERN RANGE.

NITTY GRITTY DIRT BAND:
â„“ OH, I'M THINKIN' TONIGHT
OF MY BLUE EYES... â„“

NARRATOR: MOST OF ALL,
ITS ROOTS SPRANG FROM
THE NEED OF AMERICANS,

ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO FELT
LEFT OUT AND LOOKED DOWN UPON,

TO TELL THEIR STORIES.

NITTY GRITTY DIRT BAND:
â„“ ..THINKIN' TONIGHT
OF HIM, ONLY... â„“

WOMAN: THERE'S SOMETHING
ABOUT THE LYRICS, TO ME,

THAT JUST SEPARATE IT
FROM EVERYTHING ELSE...

NITTY GRITTY DIRT BAND:
â„“ ...EVER THINKS OF ME

SONGS THAT YOU GO, "THAT
HAPPENED TO ME YESTERDAY,"

OR, "THAT HAPPENED
TO ME LAST WEEK,"

OR "I'M GOING THROUGH THAT
HEARTBREAK RIGHT NOW," YOU KNOW.

WELL, TO ME,
IT'S SOUL MUSIC.

IT'S PROBABLY
THE WHITE MAN'S SOUL MUSIC.

AND IT COMES
FROM THE HEART.

MAN: I BELIEVE THAT YOU CAN GO
LOOK AND FIND A COUNTRY SONG

TO FIT ANY MOOD YOU'RE IN,

ANY SONG THAT WILL
HELP YOU FEEL BETTER.

SOMETIME IT MIGHT MAKE YOU
CRY, BUT YOU'LL FEEL BETTER,

YOU CAN FIND THAT SONG.

THAT'S WHAT I BELIEVE.

LOVIN', CHEATIN', HURTIN',
FIGHTIN', DRINKIN',

PICKUP TRUCKS,
AND MOTHER.

YOU ALSO HAVE TO
HAND IN THERE A FEW

DEATH, MURDER, MAYHEM,
SUICIDE, YOU KNOW, SONGS,

YOU KNOW, THAT ARE REAL.

DOLLY PARTON: I THINK IT'S
JUST SIMPLE WAYS OF TELLING

STORIES, EXPERIENCING
AND EXPRESSING FEELINGS.

YOU CAN DANCE TO IT,
YOU CAN CRY TO IT,

YOU CAN MAKE LOVE
TO IT,

YOU CAN PLAY IT AT A FUNERAL,
YOU CAN--

IT'S JUST REALLY
HAS SOMETHING

IN IT FOR EVERYBODY,
AND PEOPLE RELATE TO IT.

NITTY GRITTY DIRT BAND:
â„“ OH, I'M THINKIN' ABOUT...

MAN: IT'S ABOUT THOSE
THINGS THAT WE BELIEVE IN

BUT WE CAN'T SEE, LIKE
DREAMS AND SONGS AND SOULS.

THEY'RE HANGING AROUND HERE, AND
DIFFERENT SONGWRITERS REACH UP

AND GET THEM.

COUNTRY MUSIC COMES
FROM RIGHT IN HERE,

THIS HEART AND SOUL
THAT WE ALL HAVE.

IT'S GREAT MUSIC THAT
REALLY HITS US, BECAUSE
WE'RE ALL HUMAN.

NARRATOR: "COUNTRY MUSIC,"
THE SONGWRITER HARLAN HOWARD

SAID, IS "THREE CHORDS
AND THE TRUTH."

MAN: TRUTH TELLING,
WHICH COUNTRY MUSIC
AT ITS BEST IS...

TRUTH TELLING,
EVEN WHEN IT'S A BIG FAT LIE.

IT'S WHAT AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC
HAS COME TO BE CALLED

WHEN IT FOLLOWED
THE PATH OF THE FIDDLE

AND THE BANJO.

ALL OF AMERICAN MUSIC
COMES FROM THE SAME PLACE.

IT'S JUST SORT OF
WHERE IT ENDS UP,

AND COUNTRY MUSIC IS ONE
OF THE DESTINATIONS.

[SECOR PLAYING
FAST TUNE ON VIOLIN]

âª

âª OOOOOOOHH

YEAH!

AH!

âª WHOOOOOOO

YEAH!

COUNTRY.

["FIDDLIN' JOHN" CARSON'S
"OLD AND IN THE WAY" PLAYING]

âª

NARRATOR: BY THE EARLY 1920s,

A GEORGIA FACTORY WORKER
NAMED JOHN CARSON HAD

BEEN PLAYING THE FIDDLE FOR
NEARLY 40 YEARS, EVER SINCE HIS

GRANDFATHER FIRST GAVE
HIM ONE AT AGE 10.

ALTHOUGH MUSIC WAS HIS
PASSION, HE HAD TO SUPPORT HIS

GROWING FAMILY WORKING IN
ONE OF ATLANTA'S TEXTILE MILLS,

MAKING \$10 A WEEK
FOR 60 HOURS OF LABOR.

[STEAM WHISTLE BLOWS]

BUT ON SATURDAY NIGHTS, IN THE
CROWDED FACTORY NEIGHBORHOODS,

CARSON AND HIS FRIENDS STARTED
TO MAKE A LITTLE EXTRA MONEY

PLAYING AT SQUARE DANCES FOR

FAMILIES WHO HAD MIGRATED FROM

THEIR FARMS TO ATLANTA,
NOW ONE OF THE SOUTH'S

BIGGEST CITIES.

"FIDDLIN' JOHN" CARSON:
â€œ NOW, I AIN'T GOT NO MONEY

â€œ GOT NOWHERE TO STAY...

NARRATOR: "FIDDLIN' JOHN" CARSON
SOON BEGAN APPEARING WHEREVER

AN AUDIENCE COULD BE
FOUND-STORE OPENINGS
AND FARM AUCTIONS,

CONFEDERATE
VETERANS' REUNIONS,

AND POLITICAL EVENTS RANGING
FROM KU KLUX KLAN GATHERINGS

TO A RALLY IN SUPPORT OF
A COMMUNIST ORGANIZER.

AT THE GEORGIA OLD-TIME
FIDDLERS' CONVENTION, CARSON

FOUND HIS BIGGEST AUDIENCES.

[PLAYING "TURKEY IN THE STRAW"]

EACH YEAR, SEVERAL THOUSAND
PEOPLE CAME TO HEAR MUSIC THAT

REMINDED THEM OF SIMPLER
TIMES AND THE RURAL HOMES

OF THEIR PAST.

MAN: GOING TO A DANCE WAS
SORT OF LIKE GOING BACK HOME

TO MAMA'S OR TO
GRANDMA'S FOR THANKSGIVING.

COUNTRY MUSIC IS FULL OF SONGS
ABOUT LITTLE OLD LOG CABINS

THAT PEOPLE HAVE NEVER LIVED IN,
THE OLD COUNTRY CHURCH

THAT PEOPLE HAVE
NEVER ATTENDED.

BUT IT SPOKE FOR A LOT PEOPLE
WHO WERE BEING FORGOTTEN

OR FELT THEY WERE
BEING FORGOTTEN.

COUNTRY MUSIC'S STAPLE,
ABOVE ALL, IS NOSTALGIA.

JUST A HARKENING BACK TO THE
OLDER WAY OF LIFE, EITHER REAL

OR IMAGINED.

MAN: WELL, ALL RIGHT!

NARRATOR: IN 1922, CARSON'S
AUDIENCE EXPANDED AGAIN

THANKS TO A NEW TECHNOLOGY.

THE "ATLANTA JOURNAL" BEGAN
OPERATING THE SOUTH'S FIRST

RADIO STATION, WHOSE
CALL LETTERS WSB STOOD

FOR "WELCOME SOUTH, BROTHER."

CARSON: â„“ ...IS THE MAN
THAT FEEDS 'EM ALL â„“

MAN: ANYONE WHO COULD SING,
WHISTLE, RECITE, PLAY ANY KIND

OF INSTRUMENT, OR MERELY
BREATHE HEAVILY WAS PUSHED

IN FRONT OF
THE WSB MICROPHONE.

NONE OF THE TALENT WAS PAID,
BUT THAT MADE NO DIFFERENCE.

THEY TROUPED TO WSB TO
PERFORM, AND AUNT MINNIE

STAYED HOME TO LISTEN.

NARRATOR: THE RADIO EXPOSURE
BROUGHT CARSON INVITATIONS TO

PLAY AT PAID PERFORMANCES

IN COUNTRY
SCHOOLHOUSES

AND SMALL-TOWN
THEATERS

THROUGHOUT
THE REGION.

MAN: UNTIL I BEGAN
TO PLAY OVER WSB,

JUST A FEW PEOPLE IN
AND AROUND ATLANTA KNEW ME.

BUT NOW MY WIFE THINKS SHE'S
A WIDOW MOST OF THE TIME

BECAUSE I STAY AWAY FROM HOME
SO MUCH PLAYING AROUND OVER

THIS PART OF THE COUNTRY.

RADIO MADE ME.

NARRATOR:
BUT AN OLDER TECHNOLOGY

WOULD NOW BRING CARSON
AND HIS KIND OF MUSIC

TO EVEN MORE PEOPLE.

EVER SINCE THOMAS EDISON'S
INVENTION OF THE PHONOGRAPH,

AMERICANS HAD BEEN BUYING
THE MACHINES FOR THEIR HOMES.

MOST OF THE MUSIC AVAILABLE
TO THEM WAS BY "HIGH-BROW"

ARTISTS LIKE
OPERA TENOR ENRICO CARUSO.

[CARUSO SINGING IN ITALIAN]

THEN, IN THE SUMMER OF 1923,
A YOUNG MAN FROM MISSOURI

NAMED RALPH PEER
WOULD CHANGE ALL THAT.

MAN: YOU COULDN'T POSSIBLY BE
A SUCCESS--AT LEAST, IT WOULD

BE UNUSUAL TO BE A SUCCESS--IF
YOU KNEW TOO MUCH ABOUT MUSIC.

YOU HAVE TO BE A BUSINESSMAN
AND A PROPHET, AND YOU ALSO

HAVE TO BE
SOMWHAT OF A GAMBLER.

NARRATOR: BY AGE 31,
RALPH PEER HAD RISEN THROUGH

THE RANKS OF THE NEW GENERAL
PHONOGRAPH COMPANY, WHICH HAD

CARVED OUT A NICHE
WITH RECORDS AIMED AT AMERICA'S
IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS.

ITALIAN, GERMAN, RUSSIAN,
SCANDINAVIAN, POLISH, GREEK,

TURKISH, YIDDISH,
SLOVAKIAN, LITHUANIAN,
AND CHINESE HOUSEHOLDS

ALL COULD BUY MUSIC RECORDED
IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGES.

IN 1920,
PEER HAD DISCOVERED ANOTHER
UNTAPPED NICHE IN THE MARKET.

WOMAN: â€œ I CAN'T
SLEEP AT NIGHT... â€œ

NARRATOR:
WITH THE COMPANY'S OKEH LABEL,
HE RECORDED VAUDEVILLE SINGER

MAMIE SMITH'S "CRAZY BLUES,"
THE FIRST RECORDING

AIMED AT A BLACK AUDIENCE.

IT SOLD 75,000 COPIES
IN ITS FIRST MONTH.

SEEKING MORE BLACK MUSICIANS
FOR WHAT THE LABEL NOW CALLED

ITS "RACE" RECORDS, IN JUNE
OF 1923, PEER BROUGHT OKEH'S

ENGINEERS TO ATLANTA.

BUT AFTER RECORDING TWO FEMALE
BLUES SINGERS AND A QUARTET

FROM MOREHOUSE COLLEGE, HE WAS
INTRODUCED TO RADIO STATION

WSB'S NEW CELEBRITY,
"FIDDLIN' JOHN" CARSON.

PEER WAS RELUCTANT TO RECORD
CARSON AT FIRST, UNCERTAIN

A MARKET EVEN EXISTED
FOR OLD-TIME MUSIC.

A YEAR EARLIER, TEXAS FIDDLER
ECK ROBERTSON HAD RECORDED TWO

SONGS FOR THE POWERFUL
VICTOR TALKING MACHINE COMPANY,

BUT THEY HAD NOT SOLD WELL.

RALPH PEER DECIDED TO TAKE
A CHANCE ON "FIDDLIN' JOHN."

HE RECORDED CARSON PLAYING AN
OLD MINSTREL SONG, "THE LITTLE

OLD LOG CABIN IN THE LANE,"
ROMANTICIZING SLAVE LIFE.

SECOR: "FIDDLIN' JOHN" CARSON
COMES UP TO THE MICROPHONE,

AND HE GRABS HIS FIDDLE,
AND HE BUSTS RIGHT INTO

A TUNE THAT HE'S
KNOWN ALL HIS LIFE.

[SINGING TO CARSON'S RECORD]

â„“ OH, I'M GETTING
OLD AND FEEBLE â„“

â„“ AND I CANNOT WORK NO MORE

[CARSON'S VOICE FADES OUT]

â„“ MY RUSTY BLADED HOE
I'VE LAID TO REST â„“

â„“ OH, MASTER AND THE MISTRESS
ARE LAYING SIDE BY SIDE â„“

â„“ THEIR SPIRITS NOW ARE
ROAMING IN THE WEST â„“

CARSON: â„“ ...HAVE CHANGED
ABOUT THE PLACE NOW â„“

â„“ AND IN DARKNESS
THEY HAVE GONE â„“

â„“ TO ANOTHER YEAR AND
SINGING IN THE CANE... â„“

NARRATOR: IN ATLANTA, THE
RECORDS SOLD LIKE HOT CAKES.

CARSON: â„“ ...LEFT HERE IS THAT
GOOD OL' DOG OF MINE â„“

â„“ AND THE LITTLE OLD
LOG CABIN IN THE LANE â„“

NARRATOR: PEER REALIZED
THAT THERE WAS ANOTHER
SEGMENT OF AMERICA,

PREDOMINANTLY WHITE,
WORKING-CLASS SOUTHERNERS,

EAGER TO BUY RECORDINGS OF MUSIC
THEY WERE FAMILIAR WITH.

CARSON: â„“ BUT THERE'S
ANGELS WATCHING... â„“

NARRATOR: RALPH PEER
BEGAN LOOKING FOR OTHER
ARTISTS LIKE "FIDDLIN' JOHN"

AND SOON PROCLAIMED IN
AN ADVERTISEMENT THAT OKEH HAD

"UNCOVERED A BRAND-NEW FIELD
FOR RECORD SALES" AND OFFERED

"OLD TIME PIECES" THAT WERE
SETTING OFF, HE SAID,

A CRAZE FOR THIS
"HILL COUNTRY MUSIC."

CARSON: â„“ ...CABIN IN THE LANE

[BIRDS CHIRPING]

MAN: "THE PHONOGRAPH COMPANIES
HAVE OPENED A NEW MARKET,

"ONE THAT THEY HAD NOT
DREAMED EXISTED:

"A WIDE MARKET AMONG
THE FOLK OF THE MOUNTAINS,

"OF THE MINING DISTRICTS
AND THE TIMBERLANDS.

"PLAIN FOLK TO WHOM THE STORY IS
THE IMPORTANT PART OF ANY SONG,

"WHO LIKE THE
ACCOMPANIMENT SIMPLE

AND THE WORDS UNDERSTANDABLE."

"COLLIER'S" MAGAZINE.

WOMAN: COUNTRY MUSIC

IS THE MUSIC OF THE WORKING
CLASS, IS THE MUSIC OF PEOPLE

WHO DON'T HAVE A LOT OF POWER.

WE LIKE TO TALK ABOUT
THE FOUNDING FATHERS A LOT,

BUT THE PEOPLE WHO BUILT THIS
COUNTRY, THAT'S THE PEOPLE

WHERE COUNTRY
AND BLUES COME FROM,

YOU KNOW, ARE THOSE PEOPLE.

AND YOU DON'T HAVE
AMERICA WITHOUT THEM.

BRADLEY KINCAID: â„“ IN
SCARLET TOWN WHERE I WAS BORN â„“

â„“ THERE WAS
A FAIR MAID DWELLIN' â„“

â„“ MADE EVERY YOUTH
CRY WELL AWAY â„“

â„“ HER NAME WAS
BARBAR'Y ALLEN... â„“

NARRATOR: RALPH PEER

MAY HAVE DISCOVERED A NEW
FIELD FOR RECORD SALES

IN THE 1920s, BUT THE MUSIC
ITSELF WAS ANYTHING BUT NEW.

KINCAID: â„“ SWEET WILLIAM ON
HIS DEATHBED LAY... â„“

NARRATOR: IT SPRANG FROM MANY
SOURCES, SOME OF THEM OLDER THAN
THE NATION ITSELF.

THE FIRST COLONISTS BROUGHT
WITH THEM BALLADS FROM
THE BRITISH ISLES THAT WERE
ALREADY CENTURIES OLD--

SONGS THAT TOLD STORIES,
OFTEN OF LOST LOVES, MURDERS,
OR TRAGIC EVENTS.

SOME WERE PASSED ALONG IN THE
NEW WORLD RELATIVELY UNCHANGED
FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION.

"BARBARA ALLEN," THE PLAINTIVE
STORY OF AN UNREQUITED LOVE,
A BROKEN HEART, AND TWO DEATHS,
DATED ALL THE WAY BACK
TO THE 1600s.

IT WAS NEARLY 300 YEARS OLD
WHEN BRADLEY KINCAID, WHO HAD
LEARNED IT FROM HIS UNCLE
IN KENTUCKY, FIRST SANG IT
ON THE RADIO.

PARTON: â„¢ PRETTY FAIR MISS
OUT IN THE GARDEN â„¢
â„¢ WHEN A SOLDIER BOY...

I GREW UP IN THE GREAT SMOKY
MOUNTAINS OF EAST TENNESSEE.

MY MOTHER WAS A GREAT SINGER!
SHE HAD ONE OF THOSE
OLD MOUNTAIN VOICES.

SHE USED TO SING ALL THOSE
SONGS FROM THE OLD WORLD--

"BARBARA ALLEN," "BENEATH
THE WEEPING WILLOW TREE."

SHE SAID THAT'S HOW PEOPLE
USED TO CARRY THE NEWS,

WHEN THEY BROUGHT THOSE OLD
SONGS OVER FROM THE OLD WORLD--

THOSE OLD IRISH, ENGLISH,
SCOTTISH, WELSH BALLADS.

SHE TOLD A GREAT STORY,
AND IT WAS ALL BELIEVABLE.

SO JUST WATCHING MAMA WAS LIKE
WATCHING TV, HEARING HER SING

AND TELL ALL THESE STORIES.

â„“ ... FOR SEVEN LONG YEARS
HE'S BEEN IN THE WAR â„“

â„“ NO MAN ON EARTH
I NEVER SHALL MARRY â„“

â„“ IF HE SHOULD STAY THERE
SEVEN YEARS MORE â„“

I GOT TO FINISH IT.

â„“ HE TOOK HIS HANDS BOTH
OUT OF HIS POCKET â„“

â„“ HIS FINGERS WERE BOTH
NEAT AND SMALL â„“

â„“ AND ON HIS HAND WAS
THE RING SHE GAVE HIM â„“

â„“ STRAIGHT WAY BEFORE
HIM SHE DID FALL â„“

NARRATOR: FOR GENERATIONS,

AMERICANS HAD ALSO BEEN ADAPTING
MELODIES FROM THE OLD WORLD

BY ATTACHING NEW LYRICS
TO MATCH THEIR EXPERIENCES

IN THE NEW WORLD.

"BURY ME NOT ON THE LONE
PRAIRIE" CAME FROM AN OLD

SAILOR'S SONG,
"THE OCEAN BURIAL."

"THE STREETS OF LAREDO" TOOK

ITS TUNE FROM AN IRISH BALLAD

WRITTEN AROUND 1700,
"THE BARD OF ARMAGH."

BRADLEY: WE TOOK THAT
MELODY, AND WE WROTE

ABOUT GUN FIGHTERS
GETTIN' KILLED.

WE DIDN'T INVENT
COUNTRY MUSIC,

AND I DON'T WANNA
SAY WE STOLE IT.

THAT'S A PRETTY STRONG WORD.

BUT I WILL SAY THAT WE
ADAPTED IT FROM THE ENGLISH,

THE IRISH,
AND THE SCOTTISH PEOPLE.

TENNESSEE MOUNTAINEERS:
â„¢ STANDING ON THE PROMISES
OF CHRIST MY KING â„¢

â„¢ THROUGH ETERNAL AGES...

NARRATOR: NOWHERE WAS MUSIC
MORE ESSENTIAL THAN IN CHURCH.

THE HYMNS PEOPLE SANG ON
SUNDAY MORNINGS WARNED THEM

OF GOD'S ETERNAL JUDGMENT,
BUT ALSO OFFERED THE PROMISE

OF SALVATION, EVEN TO
THE SINNERS WHO HAD BEEN OUT

CAROUSING SATURDAY NIGHT.

MAN: THE BEST CHRISTIAN
IN THE WORLD IS THE ONE WHO

REALIZES THAT HE NEEDS TO BE.

YOU KNOW, YOU'VE GOT TO
EXPERIENCE SATURDAY NIGHT

SOMETIMES TO KNOW WHAT
SUNDAY MORNING'S ALL ABOUT.

[GLASS BREAKS]

MAN: HUMAN BEINGS,
WHAT DO WE THINK ABOUT?

WE GOT VERY BASIC THINGS.

WE THINK ABOUT OUR SEXUAL
RELATIONSHIP, THAT WE NEED TO

PROPAGATE OUR SPECIES THAT
MAKES OUR LIFE SWEET AND ALSO

BITTER, AND OUR RELATIONSHIP
TO WHATEVER OUR LORD IS.

SO, WE PUT THOSE TWO
THINGS RIGHT TOGETHER.

THE SATURDAY NIGHT FUNCTION

AND THE SUNDAY MORNING
PURIFICATION.

AND YOU GOT TO GET PURIFIED
ON SUNDAY SO YOU CAN DO

THE SAME THING AGAIN
NEXT SATURDAY.

COME ON, NOW.

[BELL TOLLING]

MAN: WELL, I WENT TO
THE OLD "PRIMITIVE" BAPTIST,

WHERE THEY ALL GET UP TOGETHER
AND SING THE SAME PART,

NO MUSIC, OR NOTHING.

EVERYBODY SUNG LEAD.

[PEOPLE SINGING]

THAT'S THE WAY IT WAS
IN THE OLD BAPTIST SOUND.

SOMEONE WOULD LEAD THE SONG,
AND GIVE IT OUT.

YOU CALL IT "LINING." YOU SAY,
"TARRY WITH ME, OH, MY SAVIOR."

THEN YOU'D...

â   TARRY WITH ME,

OH, MY SAVIOR ^{â€œ}

AND THEY'D KNOW WHAT TO DO.

[THE FAIRFAX STREET CHOIR
SINGING "WILL THE CIRCLE
BE UNBROKEN?"]

NARRATOR: MOST PEOPLE COULDN'T
READ MUSIC, SO SINGING SCHOOLS

WERE ORGANIZED TO TEACH THEM
A BASIC SYSTEM CALLED

SHAPE NOTES.

SONGBOOK PUBLISHERS DISPATCHED
TRAVELING QUARTETS TO

DEMONSTRATE HOW TO ADD HARMONY
TO THE SONGS, AND THEN SELL

THEIR PRODUCTS.

PEOPLE CONGREGATED
AT SINGING CONVENTIONS

AND GOSPEL TENT REVIVALS,
WHERE THEY SANG OLD SPIRITUALS

BORN IN BLACK CHURCHES

OR POPULAR HYMNS LIKE
"WILL THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN?"

AND A CHEERY GOSPEL TUNE,
"KEEP ON THE SUNNY SIDE,"

INSPIRED BY THE WRITER'S
INVALID COUSIN WHO ASKED THAT

HIS WHEELCHAIR ALWAYS BE
PUSHED "ON THE SUNNY SIDE"

OF THE STREET.

SOMETIMES, REVIVAL ORGANIZERS
SIMPLY SET RELIGIOUS LYRICS TO

POPULAR MELODIES
EVERYONE ALREADY KNEW.

"WHY," THE SAYING WENT,
"SHOULD THE DEVIL HAVE ALL
THE GOOD TUNES?"

FAIRFAX STREET CHOIR:

â a ...THE SKY

[TAPPING FOOT]

â a ONE GLAD MORNING,
WHEN THIS DAY IS OVER â a

â a I'LL FLY AWAY

â a TO A HOME THAT'S,
DAH, DAH, DAH, DAH â a

â a I'LL FLY AWAY

THEN YOU GO...

â a I'LL FLY AWAY, OH, GLORY

â a I'LL FLY AWAY
IN THE MORNING â a

â a WHEN I DIE,
HALLELUJAH, BY AND BY â a

â a I'LL FLY AWAY

THAT MAKES YOU FEEL GOOD.

YOU CAN HAVE A HIP HURTING,
YOU CAN HAVE ARTHRITIS,

YOU CAN HAVE
ANYTHING WRONG WITH YOU,

BUT, AGAIN, IF YOU
CAN SING THAT SONG,

YOU'RE GONNA FEEL BETTER.

[2nd SOUTH CAROLINA STRING BAND
PLAYING "HAWKS AND EAGLES"]

JAZZ EMPHASIZES THIS,
AND BLUES EMPHASIZES THIS,

AND COUNTRY EMPHASIZES
THIS, YOU KNOW,

BUT WHERE THEY ALL START IS IN
THIS BEAUTIFUL SORT OF BOILING

AMERICAN MUSIC POT.

â a

â a

NARRATOR: THE INSTRUMENTS
PEOPLE PLAYED CAME FROM EVERY

CORNER OF THE GLOBE.

FIDDLES WERE THE MOST COMMON,
HAVING BEEN BROUGHT TO AMERICA

BY SUCCESSIVE
WAVES OF IMMIGRANTS.

THE FIRST KNOWN FIDDLE CONTEST
IN NORTH AMERICA WAS

ADVERTISED IN VIRGINIA
IN 1736, 40 YEARS BEFORE

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

MAN: THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN A FIDDLE AND A VIOLIN.

I WENT TO SEE ITZHAK PERLMAN
AT THE OPRY HOUSE

IN NASHVILLE.

AND SOMEBODY TOOK ME
BACKSTAGE BEFORE THE SHOW.

AND I SAID, "HI, MR. PERLMAN.
I'M CHARLIE DANIELS.

I AM A FIDDLE PLAYER."

HE SAID, "WE ARE ALL
FIDDLE PLAYERS."

SO, IF ITZHAK PERLMAN IS
A FIDDLE PLAYER, I'M PROUD TO BE

ASSOCIATED WITH THE FIDDLE.

[PLAYING "THE LITTLE OLD
LOG CABIN IN THE LANE"]

â„“ MY OLD MISSUS AND MY MASTER
WAS SLEEPIN' SIDE BY SIDE â„“

â„“ IN THAT LITTLE LOG CABIN
DOWN THE LANE... â„“

[PLAYING SAME TUNE]

NARRATOR: THE BANJO,

SECOND ONLY TO THE FIDDLE

EARLY ON, CAME TO AMERICA AS
A GOURD WITH A FRETLESS NECK,
BROUGHT BY SLAVES FROM AFRICA.

IT'S A DRUM.
YOU KNOW, IT'S...

THIS THING
CAME FROM AFRICA.

THIS THING IS PART OF
A LONG TRADITION.

THEY'VE GOT HIEROGLYPHICS OF
THESE AT THE PYRAMIDS IN GIZA.

GIDDENS: IT'S AMERICA...

BUT IT'S GOT AFRICA IN IT.

[*"MY OLD KENTUCKY HOME,
GOODNIGHT"* PLAYING]

NARRATOR: THE BANJO
EVENTUALLY BECAME

THE INSTRUMENT OF CHOICE FOR
MANY MUSICIANS

IN THE 19th CENTURY.

MAN: THERE'S SOMETHING
MYSTERIOUS ABOUT THE SOUND
OF A 5-STRING BANJO
OR EVEN A 4-STRING BANJO.

IT DOESN'T MAKE YOU SAD.
IT MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER.

THE BANJO IS A SOUND
THAT CAPTURES PEOPLE.

IT'S HARD TO IGNORE
BECAUSE IT'S SO PERCUSSIVE.

NARRATOR: BY THE 1920s,
CHARLIE POOLE, A TEXTILE

WORKER FROM EDEN,
NORTH CAROLINA, HAD BECOME

THE BEST-KNOWN BANJO PLAYER
IN THE NATION.

HE HAD BROKEN SEVERAL FINGERS

PLAYING BASEBALL, RESULTING
IN A PERMANENTLY CURLED
RIGHT HAND THAT FORCED HIM TO
DEVELOP A UNIQUE,
3-FINGERED STYLE,
BUT MOST MUSICIANS STILL
PREFERRED THE "CLAWHAMMER"
OR "FRAILING" METHOD.

SECOR: SO I PLAY IT IN
THE CLAWHAMMER STYLE.

SO WHEN THE MINSTREL
CAME TO TOWN, HE WOULD...

[PLAYING FAST, UPBEAT TUNE]

âa

âa

IT'S THAT KIND OF
ROLICKING, FAST-PACED,
YOU KNOW, TRAIN WHISTLE
KIND OF STUFF.

NARRATOR: IN THE MID-1800s,

ANOTHER INSTRUMENT
HAD GAINED POPULARITY.

CHRISTIAN FREDERICK MARTIN
IMMIGRATED TO NEW YORK FROM

GERMANY AND STARTED PRODUCING
SMALL GUT-STRING GUITARS,

WHOSE LIGHT SOUND
MADE THEM APPROPRIATE

FOR THE INSTRUMENT'S
MAIN MARKET AT THE TIME:

POLITE PARLOR MUSIC.

THEN BLACK, HAWAIIAN, AND LATINO
MUSICIANS ADAPTED IT TO

MORE DIVERSE STYLES, AND WHEN
MARTIN'S GRANDSON DESIGNED

A NEW MODEL IN

THE EARLY 20th CENTURY,
WITH A LARGER BODY AND STRONGER
NECK TO PERMIT STEEL STRINGS,
THE GUITAR BEGAN TO RIVAL
THE FIDDLE AND BANJO IN ITS USE.

[*"KEEP ON THE SUNNY SIDE"*
PLAYING]

âa

ORVILLE GIBSON OF KALAMAZOO,
MICHIGAN, MADE GUITARS, TOO,

AND INNOVATED WITH THE DESIGN
OF ANOTHER INSTRUMENT

FROM EUROPE: THE MANDOLIN.

ONE OF THE THINGS
ABOUT GUITARS, MANDOLINS,

AND BANJOS THAT MADE THEM
POPULAR IS YOU COULD

HEAR THEM.

YOU COULD HEAR
A FIDDLE FROM FAR AWAY.

YOU COULD HEAR THE CHORDS
OF THE GUITAR AND YOU
COULD HEAR THE BANJO.

ANOTHER THING IS
YOU COULD CARRY THEM WITH YOU.

YOU COULD PUT IT
OVER YOUR BACK.

YOU COULD TIE IT TO YOUR HORSE.

YOU COULD BRING IT ALONG,

AND YOU COULD
TAKE IT ANYWHERE.

THE PIANO, NOT SO MUCH.

[SHIP'S HORN BLOWS]

NARRATOR: NOT ALL OF THE MUSIC
PEOPLE CONSIDERED "OLD-TIME"

WAS ACTUALLY ROOTED IN

THE DEEP PAST, NOR DID IT SPRING

EXCLUSIVELY FROM
THE RURAL SOUTH.

LONG BEFORE PHONOGRAPHS
AND RADIO, TRAVELING SHOWS HAD

CRISSCROSSED THE COUNTRY,
FEATURING MUSIC BY

PROFESSIONAL SONGWRITERS
FROM THE CITIES.

BEGINNING IN THE 1840s,
STEPHEN FOSTER CREATED

A STRING OF HEARTFELT SONGS,
LIKE "BEAUTIFUL DREAMER"

AND "HARD TIMES,"

THAT ENDED UP

IN THE PARLORS OF HOMES

ACROSS THE NATION.

THOUGH HE WAS A NORTHERNER WHO
TRAVELED ONLY ONCE BELOW

THE MASON-DIXON LINE, FOSTER
ALSO CONTRIBUTED TUNES THAT WERE

SPREAD BY ITINERANT MINSTREL
SHOWS--WHITE PROFESSIONAL

MUSICIANS DRESSED IN
BLACKFACE, WHO DANCED

AND PERFORMED SONGS THAT
AUDIENCES BELIEVED

IMITATED AFRICAN-AMERICAN
MUSIC AND SENTIMENTALIZED LIFE

IN THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH...

JOHN PRINE: â„¤ OH, THE SUN
SHINES BRIGHT... â„¤

NARRATOR: "CAMPTOWN RACES,"
"MY OLD KENTUCKY HOME,"

"OLD FOLKS AT HOME."

PRINE: â„¤ 'TIS SUMMER,

THE OLD FOLKS ARE GAY... â„¢

SECOR: IT'S A LOT OF NOSTALGIA.

IN MINSTRELSY, THEY SELL THIS
VERSION OF THE AMERICAN SOUTH

LIKE "DARKIES
PRAISING THEIR MASTERS."

OLD UNCLE TOM, WHO WISHES HE
WAS BACK HOME IN THE OLD SOUTH.

GIDDENS: THAT'S ALWAYS BEEN
SO INTERESTING TO ME,

THE FASCINATION THAT
WHITE CULTURES HERE HAVE HAD

WITH BLACK CULTURE.

ON THE ONE HAND, IT'S LIKE
THE LANGUAGE THAT IS USED

IS SO NEGATIVE.

ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE IS
JUST, LIKE, "BUT THE MUSIC!

"BUT THE DANCE!

IT'S SO COOL."

PRINE: â„¢ ON MY OLD
KENTUCKY HOME... â„¢

NARRATOR: THE ONLY SOURCE
OF INCOME FOR A PROFESSIONAL

SONGWRITER LIKE FOSTER WAS
THE ROYALTIES FROM SALES

OF SHEET MUSIC.

HIS SONGS WERE IMMENSELY
POPULAR, BUT BECAUSE OF LAX

COPYRIGHT LAWS, WHEN HE
DIED IN NEW YORK CITY'S
BELLEVUE HOSPITAL

IN 1864 AT AGE 37,
FOSTER WAS VIRTUALLY PENNILESS.

MANY OTHER SONGS CONSIDERED
QUINTESSENTIALLY SOUTHERN

AND RURAL, IN FACT, CAME
FROM NORTHERN, URBAN SOURCES.

"CARRY ME BACK TO
OLD VIRGINNY," WAS WRITTEN

BY JAMES A. BLAND,

A COLLEGE-EDUCATED
AFRICAN-AMERICAN

BORN IN FLUSHING, NEW YORK.

"DIXIE," PLAYED AT

THE INAUGURATION

OF JEFFERSON DAVIS
IN ALABAMA, WAS CREDITED TO

DANIEL DECATUR EMMETT OF OHIO.

MAN: â„“ I'M IN LOVE...

NARRATOR: BY THE 1920s,

AS MINSTREL SHOWS
WERE FADING, RALPH PEER
RECORDED EMMETT MILLER,

STILL APPEARING IN BLACKFACE,
SINGING "LOVESICK BLUES,"

TO WHICH HE ADDED
A DISTINCTIVE YODELING BREAK.

MILLER: â„“ ...GOT A FEELING
CALLED THE BLUE-HOO-HOO-HOOS â„“

â„“ AS MY MAMA SAID GOOD-BYE...

NARRATOR: LIKE SO MUCH
OTHER MUSIC OF THE TIME,
IT DREW DEEPLY FROM

SO-CALLED "RACE" MUSIC, EVEN
IF THAT MUSIC WAS PERFORMED

ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY BY WHITES,
MOST OF THEM SOUTHERNERS.

MILLER: â„“ THAT LAST
LONG DAY WE... â„“

THE SOUTH ITSELF IS A PLACE OF
BLACK AND WHITE SOUTHERNERS.

I MEAN, IT'S--THERE'S
NO "WHITE" SOUTH.

IT'S NOT SCANDINAVIAN.

IT IS A PLACE WHERE BLACK
AND WHITE PEOPLE LIVE,

CHEEK BY JOWL,
AS WE SAY.

AND THE INFLUENCES GO
BACK AND FORWARD.

MARSALIS: YOU HAVE
THE CULTURES COMING TOGETHER.

AND WHENEVER YOU HAVE THESE

CONTRADICTIONS
TOGETHER IN THE SOUTH,

YOU HAVE A LOT OF THE OPPOSITES
THAT CREATE A RICHNESS.

SECOR: I THINK THAT FRICTION
IS A GOOD WAY

TO LOOK AT THE MUSIC.

BECAUSE OF THIS RUB BETWEEN
WHITE AND BLACK, COUNTRY MUSIC

COMES FROM THE SOUTH
BECAUSE THIS IS WHERE

SLAVERY HAPPENED.

MILLER: â€œ NOW IT'S AWFUL
WHEN YOU'RE... â€œ

GIDDENS: THE RUB
IS PEOPLE MIXING.

IT STARTS GOING BACK AND FORTH,
AND IT BECOMES THIS BEAUTIFUL

MIX OF CULTURES.

THEY MET AND MINGLED,
AND BECAME THIS EDGE,

BUT THE HEART SPOKE
MUSICALLY TO EACH OTHER.

AND THEN SOMEBODY
FROM UP HERE SAYS,

"OH, WE CAN'T HAVE THAT.

YOU GUYS CAN'T BE
DOING STUFF TOGETHER."

THAT'S WHAT THE RUB IS.

[GUS CANNON'S
"VIOLA LEE BLUES" PLAYING]

NARRATOR: BY THE 1920s,

SLAVERY HAD BEEN ABOLISHED
FOR MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY,

BUT SEGREGATION WAS STILL
RIGIDLY ENFORCED

IN EVERY ASPECT OF LIFE,

EXCEPT IN THE MUSIC THAT
KEPT CROSSING THE RACIAL DIVIDE.

CANNON:
â  a ...DOWN INDEED-E...

SECOR: THROUGH THE AGES,
BLACKS IMITATING WHITES

IMITATING BLACKS
IMITATING WHITES.

YOU HAVE THE BANJO,
WHICH COMES FROM AFRICA.

AND YOU HAVE THE FIDDLE,

WHICH COMES FROM THE
BRITISH ISLES AND FROM EUROPE.

AND WHEN THEY MEET,
THEY MEET IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH.

AND THAT'S THE BIG BANG.

MALONE: AFRICAN-AMERICAN STYLE
WAS EMBEDDED IN COUNTRY MUSIC

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING
OF ITS COMMERCIAL HISTORY.

YOU CAN'T CONCEIVE
OF THIS MUSIC EXISTING
WITHOUT THIS
AFRICAN-AMERICAN INFUSION.

BUT AS THE MUSIC DEVELOPED
PROFESSIONALLY,

TOO OFTEN, AFRICAN-AMERICANS
WERE FORGOTTEN.

COUNTRY MUSIC
WASN'T CALLED THAT YET,

BUT IT WAS MUSIC
OF THE COUNTRY.

IT WAS A COMBINATION OF THE
IRISH, THE RECENTLY FREED SLAVES

BRINGING THE BANJO INTO
THE WORLD, THE SPANISH EFFECTS

OF THE VAQUEROS
DOWN IN TEXAS, THE GERMANS

BRINGING OVER
THE OOMPAH OF POLKA MUSIC

ALL CONVERGING.

[THE HILL BILLIES
PLAYING "OLD JOE CLARK"]

NARRATOR: SPROUTING
FROM SO MANY ROOTS--

OLD BALLADS AND HYMNS,
TIN PAN ALLEY COMPOSITIONS,

MINSTREL SHOWS,
AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN BLUES--

THE MUSIC RALPH PEER
AND HIS COMPETITORS HAD BEGUN

RECORDING IN THE 1920s
WAS HARD TO CATEGORIZE

OR PRECISELY DEFINE,

BUT FOR MARKETING REASONS,
THE COMPANIES NEEDED

A NAME FOR IT.

IN 1925,
RALPH PEER RECORDED A SPIRITED

STRING BAND FRONTED
BY AL HOPKINS IN NEW YORK CITY.

AS THEY WERE LEAVING, HE
ASKED WHAT NAME HE SHOULD USE
FOR THEM IN HIS ADVERTISING.

HOPKINS ANSWERED,
"CALL US ANYTHING.

WE'RE NOTHING BUT A BUNCH
OF HILLBILLIES

FROM NORTH CAROLINA
AND VIRGINIA."

PEER HAD THE NAME HE NEEDED.

SOON, MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS
WERE REFERRING TO THE ENTIRE

STYLE AS "HILL-BILLY MUSIC."

NOT EVERY ARTIST APPRECIATED
THE TERM OR THE WAY THEY WERE

OFTEN PORTRAYED AS QUAINT
AND QUIRKY BACKWOODS HAYSEEDS.

THE EDITOR OF "VARIETY" MAGAZINE
DESCRIBED HILLBILLIES AS

"ILLITERATE AND IGNORANT,"
POOR WHITE TRASH

WITH THE INTELLIGENCE
OF MORONS."

"HILLBILLY WAS NOT A FUNNY
WORD," ONE MUSICIAN SAID.

"IT WAS A FIGHTING WORD."

PARTON: IT DOESN'T
OFFEND US HILLBILLIES.

IT'S OUR MUSIC.

BUT IF YOU'RE AN OUTSIDER
AND YOU'RE SAYING
IT'S "HILLBILLY MUSIC,"

'CAUSE YOU DON'T KNOW
ANY BETTER, IT'S ALMOST LIKE

A RACIST REMARK.

IF WE'RE HILLBILLIES,

WE'RE PROUD OF THAT.

BUT YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO SAY
IT IF YOU DON'T REALLY KNOW

WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT
OR MEAN IT.

NARRATOR: BUT AS LONG AS
IT HELPED SELL RECORDS,

MANY PERFORMERS
WERE FINE WITH IT,

INCLUDING
"FIDDLIN' JOHN" CARSON,

WHO HAD ALREADY
ADOPTED THE PERSONA

OF A COUNTRY BUMPKIN FROM
NORTH GEORGIA RATHER THAN

THE FORMER ATLANTA
MILL WORKER HE REALLY WAS.

[STEAM WHISTLE BLOWS]

[RADIO STATIC]

MAN, ON RADIO: ...WOULD TAKE
ADVANTAGE OF THIS OFFER...

NARRATOR:
RADIO WAS EXPLODING.

THERE WERE NOW HUNDREDS OF
STATIONS IN EVERY CORNER

OF THE COUNTRY, AND TO ATTRACT
MORE LISTENERS, THEY ALL

BORROWED FROM ONE OF
THE OLDEST TRADITIONS

OF MIXING MUSIC AND COMMERCE,
THE TRAVELING MEDICINE SHOW.

[BOBBY HORTON PLAYING
"WILL THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN?"]

SECOR: IN A MEDICINE SHOW,
YOU COME INTO TOWN, YOU SET UP

IN THE TOWN SQUARE,
AND YOU HAWK AN ELIXIR.

YOU'VE GOT THIS REMEDY.
AND YOU PASS OUT HANDBILLS,
AND YOU TAKE
PERSONAL TESTIMONIALS
FROM PAID DUDES OUT THERE
IN THE AUDIENCE.
AND THEY TELL YOU ABOUT
HOW WONDERFUL THEY FEEL,
HOW THEIR DROPSY WENT AWAY
AND HOW THEIR SORES
AND FESTERING WOUNDS
HAVE HEALED BECAUSE OF THIS
CORN WHISKY, THIS SNAKE OIL.
SO, YOU'VE GOT YOUR PRODUCT,
AND MUSIC IS ONLY THERE
TO PUSH YOUR PRODUCT.
MUSIC IS JUST LIKE
THE SOAPBOX YOU STAND ON.
IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MESSAGE,
AND RADIO AMPLIFIED THAT.
THE RADIO
CHANGED EVERYTHING.

NARRATOR:
IN TINY MILFORD, KANSAS,
DR. JOHN R. BRINKLEY
HAD SET UP A CLINIC
THAT PROMISED TO RESTORE
MEN'S SEXUAL POTENCY
BY A SPECIAL TECHNIQUE--
IMPLANTING BILLY GOAT
TESTICLES INTO THEM.
TO PROMOTE HIS BUSINESS,
BRINKLEY STARTED RADIO STATION
KFKB--WHOSE CALL
LETTERS STOOD FOR
"KANSAS FIRST,
KANSAS BEST"--

AND FILLED MOST OF THE BROADCAST
DAY INVITING LISTENERS

TO HIS CLINIC
AND ASSURING THEM THAT "A MAN

IS AS OLD AS HIS GLANDS."

BRINKLEY, ON RADIO: THIS IS
A WELCOME OPPORTUNITY

AND ONE THAT YOU SHOULD
TAKE ADVANTAGE OF

WHILE IT IS POSSIBLE
FOR YOU TO DO SO...

NARRATOR: HE FILLED
THE REST OF THE SCHEDULE
WITH CROP REPORTS,

WEATHER FORECASTS, AND LIVE
MUSIC BY "UNCLE" BOB LARKAN,

THE ARKANSAS STATE
CHAMPION FIDDLER.

SHENANDOAH, IOWA, HAD TWO
RADIO STATIONS, OWNED BY

COMPETING SEED STORES.

THEY STAGED FIDDLE CONTESTS
AND LIVE MUSIC FROM GROUPS

NAMED THE "CORNFIELD CANARIES"
AND THE "SEEDHOUSE GIRLS,"

IN BETWEEN PITCHES
FOR THEIR PRODUCTS.

SALES SKYROCKETED.

AND BEFORE LONG, SHENANDOAH,
POPULATION 5,000, WAS FLOODED

WITH VISITORS FROM ALL OVER
THE MIDWEST WHO WANTED TO

WATCH THE BROADCASTS
IN PERSON, PROMPTING

BOTH COMPANIES TO BUILD ORNATE
AUDITORIUMS, ARCADE SHOPS,

A MINIATURE GOLF COURSE,

AND TOURIST CABINS TO
ACCOMMODATE THE CROWDS.

NARRATOR: BUT THEY WERE
SOON ECLIPSED BY

SEARS, ROEBUCK IN CHICAGO,
WHICH LAUNCHED STATION WLS,
FOR THE "WORLD'S LARGEST STORE."

ON SATURDAY NIGHT,
APRIL 19, 1924,

WLS PREMIERED A NEW SHOW,
"THE NATIONAL BARN DANCE."

IT WAS MODELED AFTER
A SQUARE DANCE PROGRAM

ALREADY POPULAR IN FORT WORTH,
BUT THE CHICAGO SHOW
QUICKLY BECAME

THE BIGGEST OF ITS KIND
IN THE NATION.

NARRATOR: MEANWHILE,
IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE,

THE SUCCESS OF STATIONS
LIKE CHICAGO'S WLS

AND ATLANTA'S WSB CAUGHT

THE ATTENTION OF EDWIN CRAIG,
THE SON OF THE FOUNDER

OF NATIONAL LIFE
AND ACCIDENT INSURANCE COMPANY.

A RADIO STATION, HE BELIEVED,
MIGHT PROVE AN EFFECTIVE WAY

TO HELP THE COMPANY'S
2,500 SALESMEN,

WHO SOLD LOW-COST

SICKNESS AND BURIAL
POLICIES DOOR-TO-DOOR

TO WORKING-CLASS FAMILIES

IN MORE THAN 20 STATES.

EDWIN CRAIG'S FATHER
WAS AGAINST IT.

WOMAN: MY GRANDFATHER
THOUGHT IT WAS

A WASTE OF MONEY AND TIME.

"WE ARE IN THE INSURANCE
BUSINESS, AND THAT'S
WHAT WE SHOULD DO."

BUT EDWIN SAID, "OH, DAD,
LET ME SHOW YOU

THAT THIS CAN
SELL INSURANCE."

THE WHOLE IDEA WAS
TO SELL INSURANCE.

NARRATOR: WITH HIS FATHER'S
RELUCTANT PERMISSION, CRAIG

SET UP A STUDIO ON
THE 5th FLOOR OF THE COMPANY'S

DOWNTOWN OFFICE BUILDING,

WITH THICK CARPETS AND PLEATED
DRAPES HUNG FROM THE CEILING

TO IMPROVE THE ACOUSTICS.

THEY BEGAN BROADCASTING ON
OCTOBER 5, 1925,

WITH THE CALL LETTERS WSM.

ROBINSON:
"WE SHIELD MILLIONS."

AND THAT BECAME
THE LOGO OF THE STATION.

AND IT WAS BUILT AROUND
A SHIELD, "WE SHIELD MILLIONS."

NARRATOR: CRAIG RECRUITED
THE PERSONABLE GEORGE D. HAY

FROM WLS AND MADE HIM
WSM'S PROGRAM DIRECTOR.

THOUGH ONLY 30 YEARS OLD,
HAY CALLED HIMSELF "THE SOLEMN

OLD JUDGE," AND OFTEN
PUNCTUATED HIS BROADCASTS BY

BLOWING ON
A WOODEN RIVERBOAT WHISTLE.

[WHISTLE BLOWS]

NARRATOR: ON NOVEMBER 28, 1925,
GEORGE HAY INVITED

AN ELDERLY MUSICIAN NAMED
UNCLE JIMMY THOMPSON,

A FIDDLER SINCE BEFORE
THE CIVIL WAR, TO PERFORM

ON THE AIR.

HE CALLED HIS INSTRUMENT "OLD
BETSY," WHICH HE SAID HAD BEEN

PASSED DOWN FROM HIS ANCESTORS
IN SCOTLAND, AND THAT NIGHT

PLAYED FOR A SOLID HOUR.

THE RESPONSE PERSUADED HAY
TO SCHEDULE

A REGULAR SATURDAY NIGHT
BARN DANCE ON WSM,

USING LOCAL TALENT
WILLING TO WORK FOR FREE.

DR. HUMPHREY BATE,

A VANDERBILT-TRAINED PHYSICIAN
FROM A PROMINENT

TENNESSEE FAMILY WITH
A PASSION FOR OLD-TIME MUSIC,

BROUGHT HIS STRING BAND
TO THE SHOW.

HAY LIKED THEIR MUSIC,
BUT INSISTED THEY NEEDED

A NEW NAME.

DR. BATE'S ORCHESTRA SOON
BECAME THE POSSUM HUNTERS.

HAY WOULD DO THE SAME WITH
OTHER BANDS, INSISTING THEY

TAKE ON HILLBILLY PERSONAS,
EVEN IF THEY WERE

URBAN SOPHISTICATES.

THE BIGGEST STAR OF WSM'S NEW
BARN DANCE WAS DAVID MACON,

WHO HAD ONCE MADE HIS LIVING
DRIVING MULE WAGONS

NEAR MURFREESBORO, PLAYING
HIS BANJO AS HE TRAVELED,

AND SINGING, IT WAS SAID,
"IN A VOICE YOU COULD

HEAR A MILE UP THE ROAD."

HAY: AND NOW FRIENDS,
WE PRESENT UNCLE DAVE MACON,

THE DIXIE DEWDROP--WITH
HIS PLUG HAT, GOLD TEETH,

CHIN WHISKERS, GATES-AJAR
COLLAR, AND THAT MILLION-DOLLAR

TENNESSEE SMILE,
AND HIS SON DORRIS.

LET HER GO, UNCLE DAVE!
[APPLAUSE]

NARRATOR: KNOWN AS "UNCLE DAVE"
MACON, HE ENTERTAINED

AUDIENCES WITH HIS VERSATILE
BANJO PICKING, HIS MIXTURE

OF OLD-TIME AND TIN PAN
ALLEY SONGS, AND HIS

BOISTEROUS ANTICS.

â€œ ME AND MY BUDDIES
STARTED OUT THE OTHER DAY â€œ

â€œ STUDYIN' A PLAN
HOW TO GET AWAY â€œ

â€œ LIGHT COME ON,
AND THEY CAUGHT US IN THE DARK â€œ

â„“ WAITIN' FOR THE
CHESTERFIELD TRAIN TO START â„“

â„“ CONDUCTOR WAS
A-STANDIN' RIGHT... â„“

MALONE: UNCLE DAVE MACON
HAD A VERVE AND A VITALITY

AND AN ENERGY THAT SCARCELY
ANY YOUNGER PERFORMER POSSESSED.

IT WAS A REAL TREAT NOT ONLY
TO HEAR HIM SING AND PLAY

THE BANJO, BUT TO WATCH HIM.

HE PLAYED, HE TWIRLED
THE BANJO, HE STOMPED HIS FEET,

HE WHOOPED AND YELLED,
AND HE WAS A STOREHOUSE

OF STORIES.

MACON: â„“ TAKE A-ME BACK
TO THAT OLD CAROLINA HOME â„“

NARRATOR: MACON WAS PROUD
TO BE CALLED A HILLBILLY.

IN 1924, HE HAD BEEN THE FIRST
TO USE THE TERM IN A RECORDING.

HE BILLED HIMSELF
AS "THE STRUTTINEST STRUTTER

THAT EVER STRUTTED A STRUT."

MACON: â„“ ...OLD CAROLINA HOME,
OH, YEAH! â„“

SECOR: HE WAS JUST
SUCH A DOWN-HOME,

FOLKSY ENTERTAINER.

MACON: â„“ TAKE A-ME BACK,
TAKE A-ME BACK TO THAT OLD... â„“

SECOR: AND HE SANG SONGS
LARGELY BORROWED

FROM THE BLACK TRADITION

AND DIDN'T DO

ANYTHING TO HIDE IT, EITHER.

â„“ WHOA, YES,
TAKE A-ME BACK â„“

â„“ TAKE A-ME BACK

â„“ TAKE A-ME BACK TO MY
OLD CAROLINA HOME â„“

[CHEERING AND APPLAUSE]

DeFORD BAILEY:
â„“ YOU KNOW, I GOT THE BLUES...

MAN: I DIDN'T PLAY
WHILE I WAS WORKING,

BUT WHENEVER
WE STOPPED TO EAT

OR TAKE A BREAK, I'D PULL
OUT MY HARP AND START

BLOWING ON IT.

ONE TIME I WAS WORKING FOR
A WHITE FELLER IN A CORNFIELD,

AND HE TOLD ME THAT IF
I WORKED FOR HIM, I'D HAVE TO

LEAVE MY HARP AT HOME.

"WELL," I TOLD HIM, "IF I DO,
I'LL HAVE TO STAY

AT HOME WITH IT."

I MEANT IT, TOO.

DeFORD BAILEY.

NARRATOR: ANOTHER REGULAR

ON WSM'S "BARN DANCE"
WAS DeFORD BAILEY.

HE WAS BORN ABOUT 40 MILES
EAST OF NASHVILLE IN 1899,

THE GRANDSON OF A SLAVE.

INSTEAD OF A BABY RATTLE,
BAILEY TOLD PEOPLE,

HIS PARENTS GAVE

HIM A HARMONICA.

AT AGE 3, HE WAS STRICKEN
WITH POLIO AND CONFINED TO HIS
BED FOR NEARLY A YEAR.

IT LEFT HIM WITH A SLIGHTLY
DEFORMED BACK
AND STUNTED HIS GROWTH.

SECOR: AND IN THAT TIME
THAT HE WAS LAYING IN THE BED
FOR A YEAR, HE WOULD LISTEN TO
TRAINS GO BY, AND HE
WOULD BLOW HIS HARMONICA

JUST LIKE 'EM.
HE LISTENED TO DOGS BAYING,
AND HE PLAYED JUST LIKE 'EM.

HE COULD MIMIC ANYTHING.
NARRATOR: BAILEY WAS BARELY
4'10" TALL,

WEIGHING LESS THAN 100 POUNDS.
AND BY 1925, HE WAS
LIVING IN NASHVILLE, WHERE HE
HAD HELD A SERIES OF JOBS--

A HOUSEBOY FOR
SEVERAL WEALTHY FAMILIES,
WORKING IN THE KITCHEN
AT THE MAXWELL HOUSE HOTEL,

SHINING SHOES AT A LOCAL
BARBER SHOP--ALL THE TIME
DEVELOPING HIS OWN STYLE
ON THE HARMONICA AND HOPING TO
MAKE A LIVING WITH HIS MUSIC.

ONE OF HIS FAVORITE TUNES
WAS THE "FOX CHASE,"
A SONG THAT DATED BACK TO
IRISH BAGPIPE MUSIC

AND THAT BAILEY HAD HEARD HIS

GRANDFATHER PLAY
ON THE FIDDLE.

BAILEY: â„“ HEY, SIC IT!
HEP, HEP... â„“

NARRATOR: HIS VERSION
ADDED THE SHOUTS OF
THE FOX HUNTER URGING HIS

HOUND DOGS ON,
WITHOUT SKIPPING A BEAT

ON THE HARMONICA.

WHEN I WAS A KID,
I LISTENED TO THE RADIO AND I--

I REMEMBER HIM.

BOY, HE'D PLAY THE "FOX CHASE"
AND--AND YOU WOULD...

YOU WERE RIGHT THERE WITH
HIM, CHASING THAT FOX. HA HA!

MAN: DeFORD BAILEY
AND HIS FAMOUS "FOX CHASE."

NARRATOR: ALONG WITH
"UNCLE DAVE" MACON
AND THE POSSUM HUNTERS,

DeFORD BAILEY QUICKLY
BECAME ONE OF WSM'S

MOST POPULAR PERFORMERS,
APPEARING ON THE SHOW

MORE THAN ANY OTHER ACT.

WOMAN: NEEDLESS TO SAY,
WE THOROUGHLY ENJOY
YOUR SATURDAY NIGHT PROGRAM.

I HAVE ONE REQUEST TO MAKE,
AND THAT IS WHEN YOUR

HARMONICA ARTIST PUTS ON THE
"FOX HUNT," THAT WE ARE GIVEN

SOME ADVANCE NOTICE.

LAST NIGHT,

MY OLD BIRD DOG WAS LAYING

IN FRONT OF THE FIREPLACE
WHEN YOUR ARTIST

REPEATED THE WORDS,
"GET HIM! SIC HIM!"

BAILEY: âª HEY, SIC IT...

WOMAN: BEFORE ANYONE
COULD INTERFERE,
MY OLD DOG HAD TURNED OVER

TWO FLOOR LAMPS
AND A SMOKING STAND.

MRS. HOLLOWAY SMITH,
JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI.

NARRATOR:
BETWEEN THE BROADCASTS,

LIKE THE "BARN DANCE'S"
OTHER STARS,

BAILEY SPENT THE WEEK
TOURING IN OTHER TOWNS.

SECOR: YOU KNOW,
YOU'VE GOT DeFORD BAILEY

AND "UNCLE DAVE" MACON.

UNCLE DAVE MACON'S FATHER
WAS A CAPTAIN

IN THE CONFEDERATE ARMY.

DeFORD BAILEY'S GRANDPARENTS
WERE SLAVES.

NOW THEY'RE WORKING--THEY'RE
DRIVING IN A PACKARD CAR,

CRISSCROSSING THE SOUTH.

DeFORD CAN'T STAY IN ANY OF
THE HOTELS "UNCLE DAVE" IS IN,

HE CAN'T EAT IN ANY OF THOSE
RESTAURANTS, BUT HE IS FREE

WHEN HE'S STANDING UP
ON THE STAGE.

NARRATOR: MEANWHILE,

THE HILLBILLY IMAGE GEORGE HAY

PROMOTED FOR THE SHOW HAD
BEGUN TO GRATE

ON NASHVILLE'S BUSINESS LEADERS
AND SOCIAL ELITE.

EDWIN CRAIG'S COUNTRY CLUB
FRIENDS WORRIED THAT
THE "BARN DANCE,"

EVEN THOUGH IT WAS
BROADCAST ONLY ONCE A WEEK,

WAS DAMAGING
THE CITY'S REPUTATION.

NASHVILLE WAS VIEWED AS
THE "ATHENS OF THE SOUTH."

WE HAVE THE BIG FINE
PARTHENON, WHICH IS AN EXACT

REPLICA OF THE PARTHENON
IN ATHENS, GREECE.

AND WE HAVE THESE
WONDERFUL UNIVERSITIES.

THEY THOUGHT THE HILLBILLY MUSIC
WAS TACKY AND TERRIBLE.

THEY'D RATHER STAY
THE "ATHENS OF THE SOUTH,"

AND DON'T TALK
ABOUT COUNTRY MUSIC.

[ORCHESTRA PLAYING "MARDI GRAS"
FROM "MISSISSIPPI SUITE"]

NARRATOR: TO MOLLIFY
HIS CRITICS, EDWIN CRAIG

BEGAN BROADCASTING
A MORE REFINED SHOW FROM NBC,

FEATURING THE NEW YORK
SYMPHONY CONDUCTED BY

DR. WALTER DAMROSCH, JUST BEFORE
SWITCHING TO THE "BARN DANCE."

ONE NIGHT, DAMROSCH CLOSED
HIS SHOW WITH THE ORCHESTRA

IMITATING THE SOUND OF
A TRAIN COMING INTO A STATION.

JUDGE HAY CAME ON THE AIR
IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARD

AND CALLED ON DeFORD BAILEY,
WHO PERFORMED A HARMONICA PIECE

THAT DUPLICATED THE SOUND
OF A STEAM LOCOMOTIVE

AS IT STARTS OFF SLOWLY, PICKS
UP SPEED, AND THEN FADES AWAY

INTO THE DISTANCE.

[HARMONICA IMITATING
TRAIN CHUGGING]

"SOME PEOPLE CAN PLAY
THE TRAIN," BAILEY SAID,

"BUT THEY CAN'T MAKE IT
MOVE LIKE I DO."

[BAILEY IMITATING TRAIN CLACKING
AND TRAIN WHISTLE]

â  a

â  a

"WE HAD BEEN LISTENING TO MUSIC
TAKEN LARGEMLY FROM GRAND OPERA,"

HAY INFORMED HIS LISTENERS
WHEN BAILEY WAS FINISHED.

"FROM NOW ON, WE WILL
PRESENT THE GRAND OLE OPRY."

THEN HE BLEW HIS TRADEMARK
WOODEN WHISTLE AND INSTRUCTED

HIS ENTERTAINERS, "LET'S KEEP
IT CLOSE TO THE GROUND, BOYS,"

MEANING NOTHING TOO FANCY.

MACON: â  a BEEN LIVING
IN THE CITY â  a

â  a BUT I LIKE
THE COUNTRY LIFE... â  a

NARRATOR: WITHIN A FEW WEEKS,

THE "BARN DANCE"
HAD A NEW NAME:

THE "GRAND OLE OPRY."

IT WOULD EVENTUALLY BECOME
THE LONGEST-RUNNING SHOW

ON AMERICAN RADIO,

AND IT WAS DOING EXACTLY
WHAT EDWIN CRAIG HAD INTENDED:

REACHING A FAR-FLUNG
AUDIENCE TO HELP

NATIONAL LIFE'S
SALES FORCE.

ROBINSON:
"HELLO, MS. JONES.

"I'M FROM THE 'GRAND OLE OPRY.'

"CAN I COME IN A FEW MINUTES
AND TALK TO YOU

ABOUT SOME INSURANCE?"

MAN: YOUR SATURDAY NIGHT
"SHINDIG" HAS GOT MY FLOORS

DOWN TO THE SECOND PLANK,
AND I'M AFRAID SOMEONE

WILL DROP THROUGH ON
MY BARREL OF PRESERVES.

WOULD YOU PLEASE SEND ONE
OF YOUR AGENTS DOWN HERE TO

INSURE MY CARPETS, FLOORS,
SHOES, AND EVERYTHING

IN CONNECTION WITH
THE HOUSEHOLD?

GEORGE BRITTING.

MACON: â  a ...HA HA HA HA

[LOUIS ARMSTRONG PLAYING
"ST. LOUIS BLUES"]

â  a

NARRATOR: BY 1927,
THE ROARING TWENTIES HAD
REACHED A FULL HEAD OF STEAM.

THE NATION'S WEALTH
HAD MORE THAN DOUBLED,
AND FOR THE FIRST TIME,
MORE THAN HALF OF ALL AMERICANS
NOW LIVED IN TOWNS AND CITIES.

PROHIBITION HAD MADE
THE MANUFACTURE AND SALE
OF LIQUOR ILLEGAL,
BUT PEOPLE FOUND
PLENTY OF WAYS TO DRINK.

IT WAS CALLED "THE JAZZ AGE,"
NAMED FOR THE HOT, SYNCOPATED
MUSIC THAT ORIGINATED
IN NEW ORLEANS AND WAS SWEEPING
THE COUNTRY.

FOR SOME, LIKE THE AUTOMOBILE
TYCOON HENRY FORD, THE NEW MUSIC
REPRESENTED EVERYTHING
THEY CONSIDERED WRONG WITH
THE COUNTRY'S MORAL DIRECTION.

MALONE: HENRY FORD FELT THAT
JAZZ WAS A "JEWISH CONSPIRACY
TO AFRICANIZE
AMERICAN TASTE."

WHAT HE HOPED TO DO WAS TO
REINTRODUCE THE OLD-TIME DANCES
OF HIS YOUTH,
ALONG WITH THE STRING BANDS
AND THE FIDDLING THAT HAD
ACCOMPANIED THESE DANCES.

AND IN REVITALIZING
THE OLDER FORMS OF MUSIC,
HE WOULD ALSO
REVITALIZE THE OLDER SOCIETY.

NARRATOR: FORD ENCOURAGED
HIS CAR DEALERS TO SPONSOR

TRADITIONAL FIDDLE CONTESTS
AND PUBLISHED A BOOK

DESCRIBING OLD-TIME DANCE STEPS,

ALL IN THE BELIEF
IT COULD SOMEHOW

TURN PEOPLE AWAY FROM JAZZ
AND RESTORE AMERICAN CULTURE

TO A SEEMINGLY SIMPLER,
MORE VIRTUOUS PAST.

NO ONE HAD DONE MORE THAN
RALPH PEER TO BRING BOTH KINDS

OF MUSIC TO THE PUBLIC.

SINCE RECORDING
"FIDDLIN' JOHN" CARSON

AND OTHER HILLBILLY ACTS,

HE HAD ALSO BROUGHT
MORE BLACK MUSICIANS

INTO THE STUDIO

FOR HIS "RACE" RECORDS:

W.C. HANDY;

JELLY ROLL MORTON;

GUS CANNON'S JUG STOMPERS;

AND KING OLIVER
AND HIS CREOLE JAZZ BAND,

WITH A YOUNG LOUIS ARMSTRONG
ON CORNET.

NARRATOR: TO PEER,

HILLBILLY MUSIC AND
THE BLUES SHARED COMMON ROOTS.

BUT AS A BUSINESSMAN,

HE WAS LESS INTERESTED
IN MUSIC HISTORY AND THEORY

THAN IN PROFITS,
AND BY JULY OF 1927,

HE WAS ENJOYING
PLENTY OF THEM.

HE HAD LEFT HIS JOB WITH OKEH
AND JOINED THE BIGGEST

RECORDING LABEL IN THE NATION,

THE VICTOR
TALKING MACHINE COMPANY,

AFTER MAKING THEM
AN UNPRECEDENTED OFFER--

HE WOULD WORK FOR NO SALARY IF
HE COULD CONTROL THE COPYRIGHTS

OF THE SONGS AND COLLECT
THE PUBLISHING ROYALTIES.

THEN HE OFFERED HIS
ARTISTS SOMETHING EQUALLY

UNPRECEDENTED: RATHER THAN
BUYING THE COPYRIGHTS OUTRIGHT

FOR A NOMINAL FEE
AND KEEPING ALL THE ROYALTIES,

AS MOST PUBLISHERS DID,

HE WOULD SHARE
A PORTION OF FUTURE ROYALTIES

WITH THEM IF THEY
HAD WRITTEN THE SONG.

HE CALLED IT A "SQUARE DEAL,"
ONE THAT HAD BEEN DENIED ARTISTS

IN THE PAST, AND MANY
OF HIS MUSICIANS WERE LURED BY

THE INCENTIVE TO
FOLLOW HIM TO VICTOR.

AMONG THEM WAS
ERNEST "POP" STONEMAN,

A CARPENTER

FROM THE BLUE RIDGE SECTION
OF SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA,

NEAR THE TOWN OF GALAX.
WHEN STONEMAN HAD HEARD
SOME OF THE EARLY
HILLBILLY RECORDINGS IN 1924,
HE TOLD HIS WIFE
HE COULD SING BETTER THAN THAT,
AND WENT TO
NEW YORK TO PROVE IT.

STONEMAN: â„“ IT 'TWAS ON
MONDAY MORNING â„“
â„“ JUST 'BOUT ONE O'CLOCK
â„“ THAT THE GREAT "TITANIC"
BEGAN TO REEL AND ROCK... â„“

NARRATOR: HIS RECORDING
FOR PEER OF "THE SINKING
OF THE TITANIC"
BECAME ONE OF THE BIGGEST
HITS OF THE DAY.

STONEMAN:
â„“ ...SHIP WENT DOWN...

NARRATOR: SOON, HE WAS VICTOR'S
TOP HILLBILLY ARTIST
AND MAKING ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY
SOME LAND AND BUILD A NEW HOME
FOR HIS WIFE AND GROWING FAMILY,
WHICH WOULD EVENTUALLY
NUMBER 23 CHILDREN.

STONEMAN: â„“ WHEN THEY WERE
BUILDING THE "TITANIC"... â„“

NARRATOR: PEER WANTED TO MAKE
MORE RECORDINGS OF STONEMAN.
STONEMAN SUGGESTED THAT
PEER COME TO HIM, AND BRING HIS
EQUIPMENT TO NEARBY BRISTOL,
A CITY WHICH SAT ASTRIDE
THE VIRGINIA-TENNESSEE BORDER.
HE PROMISED THAT THE REGION

WAS HOME TO PLENTY OF OTHER ACTS

THAT WOULD MAKE
THE TRIP WORTHWHILE.

[THUNDER]

SECOR: RALPH PEER
HAD BEEN CORRESPONDING

WITH "POP" STONEMAN,
WHO SAID,

"YOU NEED TO COME TO BRISTOL
SO THAT WE CAN CAPTURE

SOME OF THIS
LIGHTNING IN A BOTTLE,"

THIS SOUND THAT WAS COMING OUT
OF THE HILLS

AROUND GALAX, VIRGINIA.

[VEHICLE HORN HONKS]

NARRATOR: PEER AND TWO ENGINEERS
ARRIVED IN BRISTOL

IN LATE JULY 1927 AND SET UP
THEIR TEMPORARY STUDIO

ON THE SECOND FLOOR
OF A VACANT BUILDING,

A FORMER HAT COMPANY

ON THE TENNESSEE SIDE
OF BRISTOL'S MAIN STREET.

THEY WERE USING NEW EQUIPMENT
NOW, WHICH GREATLY IMPROVED

THE FIDELITY OF THE SOUND--

AN ELECTRIC CARBON MICROPHONE
INSTEAD OF A HORN

THAT PERMITTED PERFORMERS
TO SING

WITH GREATER INTIMACY RATHER
THAN SHOUTING TO BE HEARD.

ALL OF THE EQUIPMENT,
EXCEPT THE MICROPHONE,

WOULD BE HIDDEN FROM THE ARTIST.

["TELL MOTHER I WILL MEET HER"
PLAYING]

NARRATOR:
STONEMAN AND HIS GROUP LAID DOWN

10 TRACKS, BUT RALPH PEER
BECAME WORRIED

THAT NOT ENOUGH OTHER
ARTISTS WERE TURNING UP.

HE INVITED THE EDITOR
OF THE "BRISTOL NEWS BULLETIN"

TO ATTEND THE MORNING SESSION,
HOPING FOR SOME FREE PUBLICITY.

ERNEST STONEMAN, KAHLE BREWER,
WALTER MOONEY: â„¤ IN A FAR

â„¤ AND DISTANT CITY...

MAN: INTENSELY INTERESTING
IS A VISIT

TO THE VICTOR TALKING MACHINE
RECORDING STATION.

THIS MORNING,
ERNEST STONEMAN AND COMPANY

WERE THE PERFORMERS,

AND THEY PLAYED
AND SANG INTO THE MICROPHONE

A FAVORITE IN
GRAYSON COUNTY, VIRGINIA,

NAMELY "I LOVE MY LULU BELLE."

HE RECEIVED FROM THE COMPANY
OVER \$3,600 LAST YEAR

AS HIS SHARE OF THE PROCEEDS
ON HIS RECORDS.

NARRATOR: \$3,600 WAS NEARLY 4
TIMES THE AVERAGE YEARLY INCOME

IN AMERICA.

MAN: THIS WORKED
LIKE DYNAMITE.

AFTER YOU READ THIS,

IF YOU KNEW HOW TO PLAY
"C" ON THE PIANO,

YOU WERE GONNA
BECOME A MILLIONAIRE.

GROUPS OF SINGERS ARRIVED
BY BUS, HORSE AND BUGGY,

TRAIN, OR ON FOOT.

RALPH PEER.

NARRATOR: NOW GROUPS
EAGER TO BECOME STARS WERE

QUICKLY ADDED
TO THE RECORDING SESSION,

INCLUDING
THE BULL MOUNTAIN MOONSHINERS,

RED SNODGRASS' ALABAMIANs,

AND THE WEST VIRGINIA
COON HUNTERS.

BUT MUCH MORE IMPORTANT
TO RALPH PEER

AND TO THE FUTURE
OF COUNTRY MUSIC WOULD BE

THE TWO ACTS THAT SHOWED UP
IN BRISTOL THE NEXT WEEK--

THREE MEMBERS OF A FAMILY FROM
NEARBY MACES SPRING, VIRGINIA,

NAMED THE CARTERS,

AND A FORMER RAILROAD BRAKEMAN
FROM MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI,

JIMMIE RODGERS.

"SUCCESS," PEER ONCE SAID,
IS "THE ART OF BEING

WHERE LIGHTNING
IS GOING TO STRIKE."

[THUNDER]

IT WAS ABOUT TO STRIKE FOR HIM,
TWICE, AND IN THE SAME LOCATION.

MAN: THE ONLY THING
MISSING IN THE NEWSPAPER AD,

TO ME,
WAS, "BRING YOUR SONGS.

BRING YOUR TALENT TO
THE MICROPHONES TO AUDITION,"

OR WHATEVER.

AND THEY SHOULD HAVE ADDED,
"WE'RE GOING

TO START AN INDUSTRY NOW."

BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED.

[SARA AND MAYBELLE CARTER
PERFORMING "SWEET FERN"]

ROSANNE CASH: THE CARTER
FAMILY WERE ELEMENTAL.

â„“ SPRINGTIME
IS COMING â„“

â„“ SWEET LONESOME
BIRD â„“

â„“ YOUR ECHO IN THE
WOODLAND I HEAR... â„“

IT'S LIKE, YOU KNOW,
IT WAS THE ATOM.

IT WAS THE BEGINNING
OF THE BUILDING BLOCKS

FOR THE REST OF US.

AND, UM,
THOSE FIRST RECORDINGS

AND THOSE SONGS, THEY WERE
CAPTURED RATHER THAN WRITTEN.

YOU KNOW,
THEY WERE IN THE HILLS

LIKE ROCK FORMATIONS.

SO, IN 1927,
THOSE FIRST BRISTOL RECORDINGS,

THESE SONGS THAT WERE PART
OF THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS

WERE GATHERED TOGETHER,
DOCUMENTED FOREVER,

WITH THESE PLAINTIVE VOICES
AND THESE ELEMENTAL GUITARS.

THE BEDROCK WAS FORMED
FOR THE REST OF US.

NARRATOR: ALVIN PLEASANT CARTER
WAS 35 YEARS OLD

THAT SUMMER OF 1927,
TRYING TO MAKE ENDS MEET

IN THE SOUTHWEST CORNER
OF VIRGINIA

IN ONE OF THE STATE'S
MOST IMPOVERISHED COUNTIES

IN AN AREA CALLED POOR VALLEY.

A.P. HAD BEEN BORN WITH A PALSY,

A SLIGHT SHAKING IN HIS HANDS,
AND SOMETIMES IN HIS VOICE,

THAT HIS MOTHER BLAMED
ON A LIGHTNING BOLT

THAT HAD STRUCK THE GROUND NEXT
TO HER JUST BEFORE HIS BIRTH.

ALTHOUGH HIS SCHOOLING
ENDED WHEN HE WAS 10,

HE HAD LEARNED TO PLAY
THE FIDDLE

AND READ THE SHAPE-NOTE
SONGBOOKS

USED IN THE LOCAL
METHODIST CHURCH,

IMPRESSING PEOPLE
WITH HIS RICH BASS VOICE.

HE TOOK A JOB SELLING
FRUIT TREE SAPLINGS,

RAMBLING FOR MILES ON FOOT

FROM FARM TO FARM.

IN 1914,
AFTER CROSSING CLINCH MOUNTAIN
TO FIND CUSTOMERS

ON THE MORE PROSPEROUS SIDE
CALLED RICH VALLEY,

HE HEARD A YOUNG WOMAN'S
CLEAR AND DEEP VOICE

SINGING NEARBY.

IT CAUGHT HIS INTEREST.

SO DID THE SINGER HERSELF.

CARTER FAMILY:
â   HIS DEAR ARMS AROUND ME

â   ARE LOVINGLY CAST...

NARRATOR: SARA DOUGHERTY
WAS BARELY 16 AT THE TIME

AND STEEPED IN OLD MOUNTAIN
BALLADS AND GOSPEL HYMNS.

A YEAR LATER, THEY MARRIED.

A.P. BROUGHT HER BY WAGON TO
A TWO-ROOM CABIN IN POOR VALLEY,

LATER BUILDING
A MORE PROPER HOME

IN THE FOOTHILLS
OF CLINCH MOUNTAIN,

NOT FAR FROM MACES SPRING.

AS RESTLESS AS HE WAS
AMBITIOUS, A.P. WOULD BE GONE

FOR WEEKS AT A TIME
OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS,

SELLING HIS TREES WHILE LEAVING
SARA TO CARE FOR THEIR CHILDREN,

TEND THE CROPS, CHOP FIREWOOD,

AND HANDLE
ALL THE RESPONSIBILITIES

OF A MOUNTAIN HOME
WITHOUT HIS HELP.

WHEN HE WAS HOME,
THEY SANG AT CHURCH GATHERINGS.

AFTER ONE MAN GAVE
SARA \$10 BECAUSE, HE SAID,

SHE HAD "THE PRETTIEST
VOICE I EVER HEARD,"

A.P. GOT THE NOTION
THEY MIGHT MAKE A LITTLE MONEY

WITH THEIR MUSIC.

IN 1926, A SCOUT FOR
THE BRUNSWICK LABEL APPEARED

IN THE REGION.

HE WAS LOOKING FOR A SINGING
FIDDLER, AND SUGGESTED PUTTING

SARA IN THE BACKGROUND
BECAUSE, HE SAID,

A WOMAN IN THE LEAD
COULD NEVER BE POPULAR.

A.P. WOULDN'T AGREE.

INSTEAD, HE ADDED
ANOTHER WOMAN TO THE GROUP--

A YOUNGER COUSIN OF SARA'S
NAMED MAYBELLE ADDINGTON,

A SHY TEENAGER WHO
HAD LEARNED TO PLAY THE BANJO

FROM HER MOTHER
AS WELL AS THE AUTOHARP.

THEN SHE TOOK UP
THE GUITAR AND MASTERED IT.

WHEN MAYBELLE MARRIED
A.P.'S BROTHER, ECK CARTER,

THE COUPLE MOVED
TO A TWO-STORY HOUSE

LESS THAN A MILE
FROM A.P. AND SARA'S HOME.

IN LATE JULY OF 1927,

A.P. HEARD ABOUT
RALPH PEER'S BRISTOL SESSIONS,

AND ANNOUNCED THEY WERE GOING.

THE WOMEN
WERE RELUCTANT AT FIRST.

SARA WAS STILL
NURSING HER THIRD CHILD,

AND MAYBELLE, NOW 18,
WAS PREGNANT.

ECK WAS AGAINST IT, TOO,

SINCE HIS WIFE
WAS SO FAR ALONG.

BUT A.P. WAS INSISTENT,

PERSUADING ECK TO LEND HIM
HIS CAR

BY PROMISING TO WEED HIS
BROTHER'S CORNFIELD IN EXCHANGE.

IT TOOK THEM ALL DAY
TO MAKE THE 26 MILES TO BRISTOL.

THE NEXT MORNING,
AUGUST 1, 1927,

THEY AUDITIONED FOR PEER.

"AS SOON AS I HEARD
SARA'S VOICE," HE RECALLED,

"THAT WAS IT.

I KNEW IT WAS GOING
TO BE WONDERFUL."

CARTER FAMILY: â„“ ...FOR
THE ONLY ONE I LOVE... â„“

NARRATOR: THAT EVENING,

THE CARTERS RETURNED
TO RECORD FOUR SONGS,

BEGINNING WITH "BURY ME
UNDER THE WEEPING WILLOW,"

AN OLD TUNE SARA AND MAYBELLE

HAD KNOWN ALL THEIR LIVES.

CARTER FAMILY: â„“ OH, BURY ME
UNDER THE WEEPING WILLOW... â„“

ALTHOUGH A.P.
HADN'T WRITTEN THE ORIGINAL,

PEER CONSIDERED HIS ARRANGEMENT
OF IT AND THE OTHERS THEY PLAYED

DIFFERENT ENOUGH FOR CARTER

TO CLAIM A COMPOSER'S CREDIT

AND PERMITTING PEER

TO BE THE PUBLISHER.

â„“ MY HEART IS SAD

â„“ AND I'M IN SORROW

â„“ FOR THE ONLY ONE I LOVE

â„“ WHEN SHALL HE SEE ME

â„“ OH, NO, NEVER

â„“ TILL WE MEET

â„“ IN HEAVEN ABOVE

[CHUCKLES]

AND SO SIMPLE, RIGHT?

I MEAN, IT'S LIKE YOU'VE HEARD
THE MELODY A MILLION TIMES.

THAT'S ONE OF THOSE SONGS
THAT FEELS LIKE

IT'S ALWAYS EXISTED.

IF TAYLOR SWIFT
OR CARRIE UNDERWOOD

OR WHOEVER THE HOTTEST GIRL
OF THE MOMENT IS

WANTS TO KNOW
WHERE THEY COME FROM,

THEY NEED TO GO ALL THE WAY BACK
TO THE VOICE OF SARA CARTER

'CAUSE SHE WAS THE FIRST ONE.

IT'S SARA. THEN THERE'S
BEEN EVERYBODY ELSE.

IT'S THAT SIMPLE.

AS FAR AS GUITAR PLAYING GOES,

THERE'S MAYBELLE,
THEN THERE'S EVERYBODY ELSE.

THAT'S THE GENESIS OF IT ALL.

NARRATOR: THE TRIO PERFORMED TWO
TAKES OF EACH SONG THAT NIGHT,

SARA SINGING LEAD
AND PLAYING AUTOHARP;

MAYBELLE ON THE GUITAR
AND ADDING HARMONY,

A.P. SOMETIMES JOINING IN.

PEER WAS IMPRESSED.

HE INVITED THE CARTERS
TO COME BACK THE NEXT MORNING

FOR ANOTHER SESSION.

ONLY SARA AND MAYBELLE
SHOWED UP.

A.P. MAY HAVE BEEN GETTING
A CAR TIRE REPLACED.

IT DIDN'T BOTHER PEER.

HE HAD SARA SING TWO SOLOS
WITH MAYBELLE ON THE GUITAR.

ONE WAS A TUNE
SARA SAID SHE DIDN'T LIKE

BUT AGREED TO PERFORM:

"SINGLE GIRL, MARRIED GIRL,"

WHICH COMPARES THE CAREFREE LIFE
OF AN UNMARRIED WOMAN

TO THE BURDENS OF
A WIFE LEFT AT HOME

TO CARE FOR HER BABIES.

IT CUT TOO CLOSE.

CARTER FAMILY: â„“ SINGLE GIRL

â„“ SINGLE GIRL

â„“ SHE GOES TO STORE AND BUYS

â„“ OH, SHE GOES TO STORE
AND BUYS â„“

â„“ MARRIED GIRL, MARRIED GIRL

â„“ SHE ROCKS THE CRADLE
AND CRIES â„“

â„“ OH, SHE ROCKS
THE CRADLE AND CRIES... â„“

WELL, THE SINGLE GIRL HAS

THE GOOD LIFE,

AND THE MARRIED GIRL,
IT'S HARD. IT'S TOUGH.

PERFORMED BY A MARRIED GIRL

WHO, I DON'T THINK SHE
WANTED TO BE MARRIED ANYMORE.

NARRATOR:
WITH THE SESSIONS CONCLUDED

AND \$300 IN THEIR POCKETS

AS PAYMENT FOR RECORDING
SIX SONGS,

THE GROUP NOW CALLED
THE CARTER FAMILY

HEADED BACK TO MACES SPRING.

"WE MADE IT HOME,"
SARA REMEMBERED,

"AND NEVER THOUGHT
NO MORE ABOUT IT.

"WE NEVER DREAMED ABOUT
THE RECORD BUSINESS TURNING OUT

THE WAY IT DID."

A.P. STARTED WORK HOEING

HIS BROTHER'S CORNFIELD,

JUST AS HE'D PROMISED.

NARRATOR:

MEANWHILE, BACK IN BRISTOL,

PEER WAS ABOUT TO RECORD
SOMEONE ELSE

WHO WOULD ALSO CHANGE
HILLBILLY MUSIC FOREVER.

JIMMIE RODGERS:

â„“ ALL AROUND THE WATER TANK

â„“ WAITING FOR A TRAIN...

MERLE HAGGARD: SOMEBODY
TOLD ME A STORY ONE TIME

ABOUT RED FOLEY
AND BOB WILLS AND ERNEST TUBB.

THEY GOT TOGETHER ONE TIME,

AND THEY WERE ALL
BIG JIMMIE RODGERS FANS,

AND THEY SAID,
"COULD WE AGREE

ON OUR FAVORITE TEN--
TOP TEN JIMMIE RODGERS SONGS?"

AND THEY SAID, WILLS SAID, AFTER
A LOT OF DEBATE AND TALK,

SAID THEY COULDN'T GET IT
DOWN TO LESS THAN 50.

NARRATOR: JAMES CHARLES RODGERS
FROM MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI,

WAS STILL A MONTH SHY
OF HIS 30th BIRTHDAY

IN AUGUST OF 1927,

BUT HE HAD ALREADY PACKED
SEVERAL LIFETIMES

INTO THOSE YEARS, MOST OF THEM
SPENT IN CONSTANT MOTION.

HIS MOTHER HAD DIED
BY THE TIME HE WAS 6,

AND HIS FATHER,
WHO QUICKLY REMARRIED,

WAS OFTEN ABSENT,
WORKING AS A FOREMAN

FOR THE NEW ORLEANS
AND NORTHEASTERN RAILROAD.

LITTLE JIMMIE ENDED UP
IN THE CARE OF A SPINSTER AUNT,

WHO WAS CHARMED BY
HIS IRREPRESSIBLE GOOD HUMOR

AND INDULGED
HIS ADVENTUROUS SPIRIT.

HE STARTED SKIPPING
SUNDAY SCHOOL,

THEN SCHOOL ITSELF,

PREFERRING INSTEAD TO SHOOT DICE
WITH THE SHOESHINE BOYS

AT A LOCAL BARBERSHOP,

LISTEN TO TRAVELING SALESMEN
SWAP STORIES,

OR HAUNT MERIDIAN'S THEATERS
THAT OFFERED SILENT MOVIES

BETWEEN VAUDEVILLE ACTS.

HE PICKED UP
THE MANDOLIN, THEN THE BANJO,

THEN THE GUITAR;

WON AN AMATEUR CONTEST SINGING

"BILL BAILEY, WON'T
YOU PLEASE COME HOME?";

AND AT AGE 13 RAN AWAY
FOR A WHILE

WITH A TRAVELING MEDICINE SHOW

BEFORE HIS FATHER
RETRIEVED HIM IN ALABAMA

AND PUT HIM TO WORK
AS A WATER BOY

FOR THE RAILROAD'S
MOSTLY BLACK CREWS,

WHO LAID AND MAINTAINED
THE TRACKS.

STUART:
JUST LOOK AT THE TRAIN YARDS

NORTH OR SOUTHBOUND.

YOU CAN ALMOST SEE
AND HEAR JIMMIE RODGERS

AND THOSE CHARACTERS THAT
HE WORKED WITH IN THOSE YARDS.

MEN: â„¢ PRETTIEST TRAIN THAT...

STUART: AND YOU CAN HEAR
THE MUSIC OF MISSISSIPPI.

YOU CAN HEAR THE MUSIC OF
THE OLD SOUTH BEING SUNG TO HIM

ALMOST LIKE
THOSE FIELD CHANTS

OR, YOU KNOW, THE LABOR CAMPS,
OR WHEN THEY WOULD DRAG TIE.

YOU CAN ABSOLUTELY SEE HOW
JIMMIE RODGERS TOOK IT ALL IN.

RODGERS: â„¢ HO HO, HEY HEY

â„¢ HEY HO HEY...

NARRATOR: OFF AND ON
FOR THE NEXT DECADE,

HE HELD A SERIES
OF RAILROAD JOBS--

FLAGMAN, BAGGAGE MAN,
AND THEN A BRAKEMAN ON THE RUN

BETWEEN MISSISSIPPI
AND NEW ORLEANS,

BUT IT WAS NEVER STEADY WORK.

HE MARRIED AT AGE 19, WAS
SEPARATED IN LESS THAN A YEAR,

HOBOED AROUND THE COUNTRY,

THEN CAME BACK TO MERIDIAN,
AND IN 1920,
AFTER HIS DIVORCE CAME THROUGH,
MARRIED CARRIE WILLIAMSON,
THE 17-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER
OF A METHODIST PREACHER.

9 MONTHS LATER,
SHE GAVE BIRTH TO ANITA.
WHEN HE WASN'T WORKING,
JIMMIE LOAFED AROUND
POOLROOMS AND RAIL YARDS;

WHEN HE WAS WORKING, HIS
PAYCHECKS QUICKLY DISAPPEARED--

ON TICKETS TO SHOWS,
ON EVERY PHONOGRAPH RECORD
HE COULD BUY,

AND ON A MEN'S PERFUME HE
HAD DISCOVERED IN NEW ORLEANS--

BLACK NARCISSUS,
WHOSE SCENT, HE THOUGHT,
MASKED THE HARSH SMELL
OF RAILROAD FUMES.

WOMAN, AS CARRIE RODGERS: HIS
POCKETS ALL HAD HOLES IN THEM.

ANY MONEY THAT WENT INTO THEM
WENT RIGHT ON OUT AGAIN.

HE ALWAYS DECLARED
THAT MONEY WAS NO GOOD

UNTIL AFTER YOU'D SPENT IT.

THEN IT WAS GOOD,
FOR IT HAD FURNISHED YOU

AND THOSE AROUND YOU
WITH THE GOOD THINGS OF LIFE.

NARRATOR: "IT WAS CHICKEN
ONE DAY, FEATHERS THE NEXT,"

CARRIE REMEMBERED,
"BUT IT SEEMED THAT OUR CHICKENS

WERE MOSTLY ALL FEATHERS."

RODGERS JOINED ANOTHER
TRAVELING SHOW IN 1923,

PERFORMING SOME
BLUES NUMBERS HE'D PICKED UP,

BUT IT WAS CUT SHORT
WHEN HE GOT CALLED HOME

AFTER HIS AND CARRIE'S

6-MONTH-OLD
SECOND DAUGHTER DIED.

A YEAR LATER CAME
MORE BAD NEWS.

WORKING ONCE MORE
FOR THE RAILROAD,

RODGERS DEVELOPED
A HACKING COUGH.

CARRIE NOTICED FLECKS
OF BLOOD IN HIS HANDKERCHIEF.

A DOCTOR DIAGNOSED
THE PROBLEM:

IT WAS TUBERCULOSIS,

AT THE TIME THE LEADING CAUSE
OF DEATH IN THE UNITED STATES.

THERE WAS NO KNOWN CURE.

WOMAN, AS CARRIE RODGERS:
WHEN HE WAS RELEASED

FROM THE HOSPITAL, WE KNEW--

KNEW THAT NEVER AGAIN
SHOULD HE BE A LADDER CLIMBER,

NEVER AGAIN RIDE THE DECKS
AND TEST HIS LUNGS

AGAINST ROARING WINDS,

NEVER AGAIN COLLECT
A RAILROADER'S STAKE.

[TRAIN WHISTLE BLOWS]

NARRATOR:
RODGERS TURNED TO MUSIC

AS HIS LAST CHANCE
TO SUPPORT HIS WIFE

AND SURVIVING DAUGHTER.

HE PLAYED
FOR DANCES AROUND MERIDIAN

AND BRIEFLY JOINED
A MEDICINE SHOW,

STRUMMING HIS BANJO
IN BLACKFACE

ON VILLAGE STREET CORNERS

WHILE A SO-CALLED DOCTOR PEDDLED
SNAKE OIL TO PASSERSBY.

HE WOULD VISIT STORES

AND TALK THE OWNER INTO
SELLING HIM A GUITAR ON CREDIT,

THEN GO TO THE NEAREST PAWN SHOP
TO HOCK IT FOR CASH.

IN EARLY 1927,

RODGERS MOVED HIS FAMILY
TO ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA,

HOPING THE MOUNTAIN AIR
WOULD IMPROVE HIS HEALTH.

THERE HE MET A STRING BAND
TRIO CALLED THE TENNEVA RAMBLERS

AND FORMED A QUARTET.

THE GROUP
WAS BARELY SCRAPING BY

WHEN ONE OF THE MEMBERS
DECIDED TO GO ASK HIS FATHER,

A BARBER IN BRISTOL, TENNESSEE,

FOR HELP GETTING
A BETTER CAR FOR TOURING.

RODGERS WENT ALONG WITH HIM.

THEY ARRIVED ON AUGUST 1st,

THE SAME DAY THE CARTER FAMILY

WERE DOING
THEIR FIRST RECORDING,

AND WENT TO A BOARDING HOUSE

NEAR THE BUILDING
RALPH PEER WAS RENTING.

THERE THEY LEARNED THAT
THE TOWN WAS FULL OF MUSICIANS

TRYING TO MAKE RECORDS
WITH THE VICTOR LABEL.

THEY HURRIED BACK
TO NORTH CAROLINA

FOR THE OTHER BAND MEMBERS

AND RETURNED TO BRISTOL
ON AUGUST 3rd.

BUT AS THEY REHEARSED
IN THE BOARDING HOUSE,

THE GROUP FELL APART.

THE OTHER MEMBERS SAID RODGERS
COULDN'T PLAY WELL ENOUGH.

AN ARGUMENT BROKE OUT
AND ENDED

WHEN RODGERS SAID THEY
COULD DO WHAT THEY WANTED.

HE WOULD RECORD BY HIMSELF
WITH JUST HIS GUITAR.

SECOR: THE TENNEVA RAMBLERS
WEREN'T REALLY ANYTHING SPECIAL.

BREAKING UP MIGHT BE
THE BEST THING

THAT EVER HAPPENED
TO COUNTRY MUSIC.

JIMMIE RODGERS:
â   SLEEP, BABY, SLEEP...

NARRATOR: ON THE AFTERNOON
OF AUGUST 4, 1927,

JIMMIE RODGERS ENTERED

RALPH PEER'S MAKESHIFT STUDIO.

"I LIKED HIM THE FIRST TIME
I SAW HIM," PEER RECALLED.

RODGERS SANG
ONLY TWO TUNES THAT DAY,

"THE SOLDIER'S SWEETHEART"
AND "SLEEP, BABY, SLEEP."

HE ASSURED PEER
THAT WITH A LITTLE MORE TIME,

HE COULD COME UP
WITH A LOT MORE.

THEN HE LEFT TOWN.

JIMMIE RODGERS: â„¤ ...WHILE
ANGELS WATCH OVER YOU... â„¤

NARRATOR: DURING HIS TWO WEEKS
IN BRISTOL, PEER RECORDED

MORE THAN TWO DOZEN
PERFORMING ACTS.

A FEW OF THEM
WOULD GO ON TO HAVE

LONG CAREERS
IN THE MUSIC BUSINESS;

MOST WOULD SOON BE FORGOTTEN.

BUT BY DISCOVERING

THE CARTER FAMILY

AND JIMMIE RODGERS,

RALPH PEER HAD SET

THE FUTURE OF COUNTRY MUSIC

IN MOTION.

MALONE: I THINK

JIMMIE RODGERS REPRESENTED

THE RAMBLING SIDE
OF COUNTRY MUSIC--

THE DESIRE TO HIT THE ROAD,

LEAVE RESPONSIBILITIES BEHIND,

TO GO OUT
AND EXPERIENCE THE WORLD.

THE CARTER FAMILY,
ON THE OTHER HAND,

EMBODIED THE SANCTITY
OF THE HOME AND OF THE FAMILY,

PARTICULARLY MOTHER,
WHO KEPT THE HOME TOGETHER.

AND THOSE HAVE BEEN
TWO IMPORTANT IMPULSES

IN COUNTRY MUSIC EVER SINCE

'CAUSE SORT OF THE REVERSE SIDES
OF THE SAME COIN.

[WHISTLE BLOWS]

NARRATOR: THAT NOVEMBER,

SHORTLY AFTER HIS FIRST
RECORDING HAD BEEN RELEASED,

RODGERS SHOWED UP
UNANNOUNCED IN NEW YORK CITY

WITH ONLY \$10 IN HIS POCKET.

HE CHECKED
INTO AN EXPENSIVE HOTEL,

SHOWED THE DESK CLERK
A COPY OF HIS NEW RECORD

AND BRASHLY TOLD HIM
TO CHARGE EVERYTHING

TO THE VICTOR COMPANY.

THEN HE CALLED RALPH PEER

TO SAY HE WAS READY
FOR ANOTHER SESSION.

NARRATOR: AMONG
THE FOUR SIDES RODGERS RECORDED

A FEW DAYS LATER WAS
ONE HE HAD STRUNG TOGETHER

FROM A MIXTURE OF SONGS

HE HAD HEARD OVER THE YEARS--

A STANDARD
12-BAR BLUES MELODY

WITH SNATCHES
OF BORROWED LYRICS

THAT INTRODUCED THELMA,

"THAT GAL
THAT MADE A WRECK OUT OF ME,"

BUT BRAGGED,
"I CAN GET MORE WOMEN

THAN A PASSENGER TRAIN
CAN HAUL,"

THEN WARNED,
"I'M GONNA BUY ME A PISTOL

JUST AS LONG AS I'M TALL"

AND, "I'M GONNA SHOOT
PORE THELMA

JUST TO SEE HER JUMP AND FALL."

JIMMIE RODGERS: â„“ I'M
GONNA SHOOT PORE THELMA... â„“

NARRATOR: TO IT HE ADDED
WHAT HE CALLED A "BLUE YODEL,"

SOMETHING HE HAD BEEN DEVELOPING

THAT ALSO DREW
FROM DEEP ROOTS--

THE ALPINE YODELS THAT BECAME
POPULAR IN AMERICA IN THE 1840s,

THEN WERE ADAPTED BY BLACK
AND BLACKFACE MINSTREL SINGERS

AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY.

JIMMIE RODGERS
WAS CONFLATING THE BLUES

WITH THE RURAL WHITE
EXPERIENCE AND SOUND.

AND I THINK THIS WENT ON A LOT.

WE JUST DON'T SEE IT
UNTIL HE SHOWED UP.

AND, OF COURSE,
HE HAD THAT LITTLE YODEL,

â   YODEL-LEH-HEE-EEE-AY-
OH-DE-LO â  

â   OH-OH DE-LAY

AND, UH, PEOPLE HADN'T
REALLY HEARD THAT BEFORE.

NARRATOR:
HE WAS "TACKING YODELS

ONTO JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING,"
CARRIE REMEMBERED.

"EVEN HIS SHARE OF
CONVERSATION AROUND THE HOUSE

WAS LARGELY YODELS."

PEER RELEASED THE NEW SONG
UNDER THE TITLE "BLUE YODEL"

IN THE SPRING OF 1928.

IT WAS AN IMMEDIATE HIT.

JIMMIE RODGERS: â   ...RATHER
DRINK MUDDY WATER... â  

HAGGARD:
WELL, HE HAD SONGS THAT SPOKE

IN THE LANGUAGE THEY UNDERSTOOD

ABOUT SUBJECT MATTER
THEY UNDERSTOOD.

JIMMIE RODGERS: â   ...MUDDY WATER
AND SLEEP IN A HOLLOW LOG... â  

HAGGARD: HE HAD THIS WONDERFUL
EAR AND THIS WONDERFUL VOICE.

AND HIS DELIVERY WAS TOTALLY,
TOTALLY UNHEARD OF.

I THINK IT CAME OUT
OF THE BLACK BLUES

AND MIXED IN
WITH HIS YODELING,

AND THEY CALLED HIM
THE "BLUE YODELER."

NARRATOR: RODGERS HAD
EVEN GREATER SUCCESS

WITH A SONG RECORDED
IN A THIRD SESSION,

ALSO DERIVED FROM
AFRICAN-AMERICAN BLUES

AND JUG BAND MUSICIANS--
"HE'S IN THE JAILHOUSE NOW."

SECOR: WE GET TO GO
TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TRACKS

WHEN WE BUY
JIMMIE RODGERS RECORDS.

WE'RE ABLE TO GO
TO THOSE JUKE JOINTS

THAT WE'RE NOT INVITED TO.

WHETHER WE KNOW IT OR NOT,
THAT'S WHERE THE APPEAL IS.

JIMMIE RODGERS:
â€œ HE'S IN THE JAILHOUSE NOW

â€œ HE'S IN
THE JAILHOUSE NOW... â€œ

NARRATOR:
BY MIDSUMMER OF 1928

WITH THE RELEASE OF MORE SONGS,

"BRAKEMAN'S BLUES"

AND A NUMBER PEER ENTITLED
"BLUE YODEL NO. II,"

ROYALTIES STARTED
POURING IN-\$1,000 A MONTH,

WHICH RODGERS SPENT
AS QUICKLY AS THEY ARRIVED.

HE PAID \$1,500 FOR
THE "JIMMIE RODGERS SPECIAL,"

A PERSONALIZED
MARTIN GUITAR WITH GOLD INLAY,

HIS NAME SPELLED OUT
IN MOTHER OF PEARL ON THE NECK,

AND THE WORD "THANKS"
EMBLAZONED ON THE BACK.

NARRATOR: HE BEGAN A TOUR OF
MAJOR THEATERS AND AUDITORIUMS

IN THE SOUTH,
MAKING \$500 A WEEK,

SOMETIMES APPEARING
IN HIS RAILROAD OUTFIT

AND BILLING HIMSELF
AS "THE SINGING BRAKEMAN."

IN MIAMI, APPEARING

BEFORE A HUGE INTERNATIONAL
MEN'S BIBLE CLASS,

HE ADMITTED HE
DIDN'T KNOW ANY CHURCH SONGS,

SO HE SANG
"IN THE JAILHOUSE NOW"

AND THE RACY
"FRANKIE AND JOHNNY" INSTEAD.

THEY GAVE HIM
A STANDING OVATION.

THEN HE MADE
A TRIUMPHANT RETURN TO MERIDIAN,

ARRIVING IN A SHINY NEW CAR,

WEARING EXPENSIVE CLOTHES
AND DIAMOND RINGS,

AND MAKING A PUBLIC POINT OF
PAYING OFF HIS OLD DEBTS.

STUART: HE TALKED ABOUT US.

HE WAS OUR REPRESENTATIVE.

AS COUNTRY PEOPLE,
HE WAS OUR AMBASSADOR.

HE WAS A ROGUE
JUST LIKE THE REST OF US.

HE HAD HARD TIMES JUST LIKE
THE REST OF US,

BUT WE APPRECIATED HIM
DRESSING UP IN HIS COOL CLOTHES

AND DRIVING IN HIS FANCY CAR

AND TALKING ABOUT US
COUNTRY PEOPLE.

HE REPRESENTED US WELL.

NARRATOR: RODGERS ADDED

A STRING OF PERSONAL APPEARANCES

AND AUTOGRAPH SESSIONS
AT LOCAL MUSIC STORES

AND CAROUSED WITH OLD FRIENDS

DESPITE HIS
INCREASING EXHAUSTION.

EACH PERFORMANCE
LEFT HIM WEAKER,

DRIPPING IN SWEAT
AND GASPING FOR BREATH.

ONE NIGHT,
HE BLACKED OUT BACKSTAGE.

A DOCTOR TOLD HIM
THAT WITHOUT PROPER REST,

HE WOULDN'T LIVE
MORE THAN ANOTHER YEAR OR TWO.

INSTEAD, RODGERS
BOOKED HIMSELF ON ANOTHER TOUR

AND ANOTHER RECORDING SESSION.

RALPH PEER
NOW BEGAN EXPERIMENTING

WITH NEW ORCHESTRATIONS
AND STYLES FOR HIS STAR--

JAZZ ENSEMBLES,
SMALL ORCHESTRAS,

AFRICAN-AMERICAN
JUG BANDS, UKULELES,

CHAMPION WHISTLERS,

OR SIMPLY MUSICIANS
JIMMIE RODGERS

HAPPENED TO HAVE MET THE DAY
BEFORE A RECORDING SESSION.

PEER SAID, "HE COULD
RECORD ANYTHING."

MALONE: IT DIDN'T MATTER TO
HIM WHERE THE MUSIC CAME FROM.

IT DIDN'T MATTER TO HIM
WHAT THE STYLE WAS

THAT HE PLAYED.

I THINK HE WAS WILLING
TO DO WHATEVER WAS COMMERCIAL,

WHATEVER WOULD CATCH
THE ATTENTION OF LISTENERS.

NARRATOR: TO HELP HIM
COME UP WITH MORE SONGS

THAT COULD BE COPYRIGHTED,

RODGERS HAD ENLISTED
CARRIE'S SISTER,

ELSIE McWILLIAMS,
A SUNDAY SCHOOL MUSIC TEACHER

WITH A GIFT FOR
TURNING AN OVERHEARD PHRASE

OR RANDOM INCIDENT
INTO A MELODY WITH LYRICS.

JIMMIE COULDN'T READ
MUSICAL NOTATIONS.

"CRAZY LITTLE FLY SPECKS
WITH FUNNY TAILS,"

HE CALLED THEM,

SO SHE OFTEN CAME TO TEACH
HER NEW COMPOSITIONS TO HIM

IN PERSON.

IN ALL, ELSIE McWILLIAMS
WOULD WRITE OR CONTRIBUTE TO

MORE THAN A THIRD
OF RODGERS' RECORDED SONGS.

AT ONE SESSION IN DALLAS,

WHICH WOULD INCLUDE
A HAWAIIAN STEEL GUITAR PLAYER,

ELSIE HEARD JIMMIE SAY,
"I'D LIKE TO HAVE ME

ONE OF THEM HULA-HULA GIRLS."

THAT NIGHT SHE CAME UP WITH
A NEW SONG, WHICH THEY RECORDED

THE NEXT MORNING:
"EVERYBODY DOES IT IN HAWAII."

JIMMIE RODGERS: â„¤ EVERYBODY
DOES IT IN HAWAII â„¤

â„¤ SHE'S GOT TWO PURTY LEGS...

NARRATOR: WITH ITS SUGGESTIVE
DOUBLE ENTENDRES,

THE SONG EARNED A WARNING
FROM "VARIETY" MAGAZINE

THAT RECORD DEALERS

SHOULD "NOT SELL THIS
INTO POLITE FAMILIES,"

BECAUSE, THE REVIEW SAID,

"IT'S NEVER MADE CLEAR

WHAT EVERYBODY DOES IN HAWAII."

[JIMMIE RODGERS YODELING]

NARRATOR: AT ANOTHER SESSION
OUT IN HOLLYWOOD,

PEER WOULD BRING IN
A 28-YEAR-OLD TRUMPET PLAYER

TO ACCOMPANY RODGERS.

IT WAS LOUIS ARMSTRONG,
WHO WAS ON HIS WAY TO BECOMING

THE MOST INFLUENTIAL
JAZZ ARTIST OF ALL TIME.

THEY BOTH WERE PUSHING
THE BOUNDARIES OF THEIR MUSIC.

RODGERS AND ARMSTRONG:
â€œ ...DIDN'T MEAN NO HARM...

MAN: MY FATHER
WANTED TO GET THEM TOGETHER

TO SEE WHAT WOULD HAPPEN, TO
HAVE THAT CHEMISTRY EXPERIMENT,

BECAUSE HE KNEW
BOTH INDIVIDUALS.

HE KNEW THE STRENGTH
OF THEIR PERSONALITIES.

AND HE KNEW
THEIR ARTISTIC TALENT.

NARRATOR: TOGETHER,
THEY RECORDED

"STANDIN' ON THE CORNER,"
THE STORY OF A TENNESSEE HUSTLER

ARRESTED ON
BEALE STREET IN MEMPHIS.

[TRUMPET SOLO]

[JIMMIE RODGERS YODELING]

NARRATOR: PEER RELEASED IT

AS "BLUE YODEL NUMBER 9."

[HORSE NEIGHING]

MAN: HYAH! HYAH!

NARRATOR: MEANWHILE,
RODGERS HAD RELOCATED TO TEXAS,

WHOSE DRY CLIMATE HAD
ATTRACTED SEVERAL SANATORIUMS

FOR TREATING TUBERCULOSIS.

IN HIS NEW SURROUNDINGS,

HE BECAME THE "YODELING COWBOY,"

INSPIRING A GENERATION
OF FOLLOWERS TO BELIEVE

THAT ALL COWBOYS
NOT ONLY SANG BUT YODELED.

JIMMIE RODGERS: SURE.

GIVE ME THAT OLD GUITAR, THEN...

NARRATOR: IN THE FALL OF 1929,

PEER BROUGHT RODGERS TO
A STUDIO IN CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY,

TO MAKE A SHORT
TALKING PICTURE.

MANY MUSIC EXECUTIVES
SAW THE TALKIES

AS A THREAT
TO LIVE PERFORMANCES.

PEER SAW THEM
AS ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY

FOR HIS STAR
TO BECOME BETTER KNOWN.

â€œ ALL AROUND
THE WATER TANKS â€œ

â€œ WAITING FOR A TRAIN

â€œ A THOUSAND MILES

â€œ AWAY FROM HOME

â€œ SLEEPING IN THE RAIN

â€œ THOUGH MY POCKETBOOK
IS EMPTY â€œ

â€œ MY HEART IS FULL OF PAIN

â€œ I'M A THOUSAND MILES
AWAY FROM HOME â€œ

â€œ WAITING FOR
A TRAIN â€œ

â€œ YODEL-LEH-HEE-OH-
DE-LEH-HEE-AY â€œ

â€œ DE-LEH-HEE

[THE CARTER FAMILY PLAYING
"KEEP ON THE SUNNY SIDE"]

NARRATOR: IN 1928,
RALPH PEER HAD CALLED

THE CARTER FAMILY
BACK INTO THE STUDIO.

THEIR FIRST RECORDINGS
HAD SOLD WELL, AND HE WAS EAGER

TO CAPITALIZE ON
THEIR GROWING POPULARITY.

THEY RECORDED 12 MORE SONGS.

AMONG THEM WAS

"KEEP ON THE SUNNY SIDE,"

WHICH A.P. WOULD ADOPT

AS THE CARTER FAMILY'S
SIGNATURE TUNE,

AND ANOTHER SONG,

"I'LL TWINE MID THE RINGLETS,"

THAT HAD BEEN HANDED DOWN

IN MAYBELLE'S FAMILY
FOR GENERATIONS.

â„“ I WILL TWINE WITH MY MINGLES

â„“ AND WAVING BLACK HAIR

â„“ WITH THE ROSES SO RED

â„“ AND THE LILIES SO FAIR

AND THEN WE GET INTO...

â„“ AND THE MYRTLES SO BRIGHT

â„“ AS THE EMERALD DEW

â„“ PALE AND THE LEADER

â„“ AND EYES LOOK LIKE BLUE

SARA CARTER: â„“ OH, I'LL TWINE
WITH MY MINGLES... â„“

NARRATOR: THE CARTERS'
RE-TITLED THEIR VERSION

"WILDWOOD FLOWER,"
FEATURING SARA SINGING ALONE,

WITH MAYBELLE DEMONSTRATING
A GUITAR TECHNIQUE

SHE WAS PERFECTING
IN WHICH SHE PICKED THE MELODY

WITH HER THUMB
ON THE BASS STRINGS

WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY PROVIDING
THE RHYTHM AND CHORDS

WITH HER OTHER FINGERS.

"I DIDN'T EVEN THINK
ABOUT IT," SHE SAID.

"I JUST PLAYED THE WAY
I WANTED TO, AND THAT'S IT."

IT WOULD COME TO BE
CALLED THE CARTER SCRATCH.

MAYBELLE USED
A THUMB PICK AND A FINGER PICK

WHEN SHE PLAYED GUITAR.

AND SHE REALLY
ONLY USED TWO FINGERS--

THE THUMB
AND THE FOREFINGER.

THIS THUMB WAS THE DRIVING FORCE
FOR THE MELODY.

AND GRANDMA WOULD JUST TELL ME,

BECAUSE I WAS SO LITTLE

WHEN SHE TAUGHT ME
THE CARTER SCRATCH,

SHE SAID, "THIS MIDDLE FINGER,
YOU JUST KEEP IT GOING

NO MATTER WHAT."

HA HA! AND THAT WAS KIND OF
LIKE THE CLUE TO IT ALL,

TO A SMALL CHILD.

MAN: TO ME,
MOTHER MAYBELLE AS A GUITARIST

WAS MAYBE
THE MOST ICONIC INSTRUMENTALIST

THAT WE'VE EVER HAD.

THERE'S RHYTHM,

AND THERE'S
THE MELODY.

AND AT ITS SIMPLEST PLACE,

IT STILL CARRIES
MAYBE THE MOST POETRY.

NARRATOR: MAYBELLE'S
TECHNIQUE WOULD BECOME

ONE OF THE MOST COPIED
GUITAR STYLES IN MUSIC HISTORY.

McEUEN: I WAS TALKING
TO DUANE ALLMAN'S DAUGHTER

A WHILE BACK, AND SHE TOLD ME,

"MY MAMA TOLD ME THAT DADDY

"TAUGHT HER HOW TO PLAY
'WILDWOOD FLOWER'

ON THE GUITAR."

NOW, CAN YOU IMAGINE
DUANE ALLMAN SAYING, "NO, HONEY,

IT'S LIKE THIS."

[IMITATING "WILDWOOD FLOWER"
MELODY]

THAT'S HOW POWERFUL
THE CARTER FAMILY MUSIC WAS.

THERE'S NOT
A GUITAR PLAYER THAT'S PICKED UP

A 6-STRING, I DON'T
THINK, THAT HASN'T TOUCHED

ON SOME CARTER FAMILY MUSIC.

NARRATOR:
WHEN "WILDWOOD FLOWER,"

AND "KEEP ON THE SUNNY SIDE"
SOLD MORE THAN 100,000 RECORDS,

ROYALTIES STARTED FLOWING
IN TO MACES SPRING.

A.P. WAS ABLE TO BUY
HIS FIRST AUTOMOBILE.

HE SCOURED THE AREA FOR
NEW SONGS HE COULD COPYRIGHT,

SEARCHING FOR THEM
AMONG HIS NEIGHBORS,

RETURNING WITH HIS POCKETS
FILLED WITH SCRAPS OF PAPER

CONTAINING BITS
AND PIECES OF LYRICS.

MAN: HE WAS A SONG CATCHER.

HE'D HEAR ABOUT SOMEONE
HAVING A SONG, YOU KNOW,

THREE HOLLERS OVER,

AND IT WOULD TAKE HIM
ALL DAY TO GO UP

AND HEAR THIS PERSON,
YOU KNOW,

AND THEN HE'D COME BACK HOME.

BUT HE'D HAVE A NEW SONG
THAT HE HAD NEVER HEARD BEFORE.

NARRATOR: A.P. HAD
TROUBLE REMEMBERING MELODIES,

SO SARA AND MAYBELLE
WOULD SET THE WORDS

TO OLD ONES
THEY HAD KNOWN FOR YEARS.

THEN THE THREE OF THEM WOULD
PRACTICE THE NEW ARRANGEMENTS.

IN THE SUMMER OF 1928,

A.P. WAS ON A SONG-GATHERING
TRIP IN KINGSPORT, TENNESSEE,

IN THE BLACK SECTION OF TOWN,

WHEN HE MET A BLUES SINGER
AND SLIDE GUITAR PLAYER

NAMED LESLEY RIDDLE.

RIDDLE HAD LOST A LEG
IN AN ACCIDENT

AND NOW SUPPORTED HIMSELF

PLAYING ON STREET CORNERS
AND RAILROAD DEPOTS.

A.P. INVITED HIM TO HELP
IN THE HUNT FOR NEW SONGS,

AND RIDDLE ACCEPTED, ULTIMATELY
MAKING 15 TRIPS

WITH CARTER THROUGH VIRGINIA,
EAST TENNESSEE, NORTH CAROLINA,

AND PARTS OF GEORGIA.

MAN, AS LESLEY RIDDLE: HE'D JUST
GO INTO PEOPLE'S HOMES

AND TELL THEM, "HELLO.
I WAS TOLD BY SOMEONE THAT YOU

"GOT A SONG,
KIND OF AN OLD SONG.

WOULD YOU MIND
LETTING ME HEAR IT?"

SO THEY'D GO AND GET IT
AND SING IT FOR HIM.

HE'D GO 90 MILES
IF HE HEARD SOMEONE SAY

THAT SOMEONE HAD AN OLD SONG

THAT HAD NEVER BEEN RECORDED
OR DIDN'T HAVE A COPYRIGHT.

NARRATOR: WHILE CARTER
WROTE DOWN THE WORDS,

RIDDLE FOCUSED
ON MEMORIZING THE MELODIES.

"I WAS HIS TAPE RECORDER,"
RIDDLE SAID.

RIDDLE ALSO SHARED SOME BLUES
GUITAR STYLINGS WITH MAYBELLE

AND INTRODUCED
THE CARTERS TO HYMNS SUNG

IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN PENTECOSTAL
AND BAPTIST CHURCHES,

WHICH THEY ADDED TO THEIR OWN
GOSPEL AND SACRED SELECTIONS.

CARTER FAMILY:

â„“ OH, MY LOVING MOTHER

â„“ WHEN THE WORLD'S ON FIRE

â„“ DON'T YOU WANT GOD'S BOSOM

â„“ TO BE YOUR PILLOW?

â„“ TIDE ME OVER

â„“ IN THE ROCK OF AGES

â„“ ROCK OF AGES CLEFT FOR ME...

NARRATOR:
ONE MELODY HE TAUGHT THEM

WAS "WHEN THE WORLD'S ON FIRE."

THE CARTER FAMILY
WOULD LATER REUSE THE BASIC TUNE

FOR ANOTHER SONG,
"LITTLE DARLING, PAL OF MINE."

A FEW YEARS AFTER THAT,
WOODY GUTHRIE,

AN ADMIRER OF THE CARTERS,
WOULD INCORPORATE IT

INTO HIS CLASSIC
"THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND."

GIDDENS: THAT'S AMERICA.

IT CAME FROM THIS BLACK CHURCH

AND ENDED UP
AS THIS FOLK ANTHEM.

YOU KNOW, YOU HAVE ALL THESE--
THESE DIFFERENT PEOPLE GOING,

"OH, I LOVE THAT.
LET ME USE IT."

IT'S NOT, LIKE, "OH, WE CAN'T
USE THAT BECAUSE IT'S BLACK."

BUT IT'S, LIKE,
"OH, I LOVE THAT."

THAT'S THE BEAUTIFUL
PART OF AMERICAN MUSIC, IS,

LIKE, IT DOESN'T MATTER
WHO IT CAME FROM.

"I LOVE THAT, AND I WANT
TO DO SOMETHING WITH IT."

NARRATOR: UNLIKE JIMMIE RODGERS,
WHO TOURED CONSTANTLY,

THE CARTERS STAYED
CLOSE TO HOME.

MAYBELLE WAS NOW A MOTHER, TOO.

HER DAUGHTER HELEN HAD BEEN BORN

SHORTLY AFTER
THE BRISTOL SESSIONS;

A SECOND DAUGHTER, JUNE, CAME
ALONG IN THE SUMMER OF 1929.

SARA HAD HER OWN
THREE CHILDREN TO CARE FOR,

AND SHE HATED
PUBLIC PERFORMANCES

IN FRONT OF TOTAL STRANGERS.

BUT A.P. ORGANIZED SHORT TRIPS

IN WHICH THEY WERE FED
AND HOUSED OVERNIGHT

BY RURAL FANS.

HE TACKED UP POSTERS
ON BARNS AND TREES, ANNOUNCING

AN APPEARANCE BY THE TRIO
IN CHURCHES, SCHOOLS,

OR SMALL-TOWN THEATERS.

ADMISSION WAS
FROM 15 TO 25 CENTS.

"THE PROGRAM," THE POSTERS
PROMISED, "IS MORALLY GOOD."

DURING PERFORMANCES,
A.P.'s ATTENTION

SOMETIMES SEEMED TO WANDER.

"IF HE FELT LIKE SINGING,
HE WOULD SING," MAYBELLE SAID.

"IF HE DIDN'T,
HE LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW.

SO WE NEVER DEPENDED ON HIM."

MOST OF THE TIME, THE CARTERS
STAYED IN POOR VALLEY,

WHERE NEIGHBORS OFTEN
GATHERED OUTSIDE THEIR HOUSE

JUST TO HEAR THEM PRACTICE

FOR THE INCREASING NUMBER
OF RECORDING SESSIONS

RALPH PEER
WAS SCHEDULING FOR THEM

IN ATLANTA, MEMPHIS, CHARLOTTE,
AND CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY.

THE SESSION FEES AND ROYALTIES
FROM RECORD SALES--

700,000 COPIES IN TWO YEARS--
PROVIDED A STEADY INCOME.

A.P. BOUGHT
LARGER PIECES OF LAND.

SARA GOT HERSELF
SOME PERFUME AND A MINK STOLE.

MAYBELLE PURCHASED
A BIGGER GIBSON GUITAR FOR \$275.

BOTH WOMEN INDULGED THEMSELVES
BY BUYING MOTORCYCLES.

CARTER FAMILY: â„¤ ...CAN'T FEEL
AT HOME IN THIS WORLD ANYMORE â„¤

NARRATOR:
THEN IN OCTOBER OF 1929,

THE FINANCIAL BUBBLE
THAT HAD FUELED
THE ROARING TWENTIES BURST.

THE STOCK MARKET CRASHED,
AND THE NATION DESCENDED
INTO WHAT WOULD BE CALLED
THE GREAT DEPRESSION.

BANKS AND BUSINESSES
FAILED BY THE THOUSANDS.

MILLIONS OF WORKERS
LOST THEIR JOBS.

IN MAJOR CITIES, DESTITUTE
RESIDENTS RELIED ON BREADLINES

AND SOUP KITCHENS
MERELY TO SURVIVE.

CARTER FAMILY: â€œ IT TAKES
A WORRIED MAN â€œ

â€œ TO SING A WORRIED SONG...

NARRATOR: THE RECORDING
INDUSTRY WAS HARD-HIT.

BETWEEN 1929 AND 1930,

RECORD SALES
IN THE UNITED STATES DROPPED

FROM \$74 MILLION
TO \$46 MILLION,

THEN TO 17 MILLION IN 1931.

NO ARTIST WAS IMMUNE,

ALTHOUGH FOR A WHILE SALES OF
CARTER FAMILY RECORDS HELD UP,

PARTLY THANKS TO THEIR SONG
"WORRIED MAN BLUES,"

THEIR BEST-SELLER OF 1930,
WHICH SEEMED TO BOTH CAPTURE

THE NATION'S MOOD

AND EXPRESS THE HOPE THAT
"I WON'T BE WORRIED LONG."

CARTER FAMILY: â„“ BUT I WON'T BE
WORRIED LONG â„“

[TRAIN WHISTLE BLOWS]

[JIMMIE RODGERS PLAYING
"NO HARD TIMES"]

RODGERS:
â„“ GOT CORN IN MY CRIB

â„“ COTTON GROWING IN MY PATCH

â„“ GOT CORN IN MY CRIB

â„“ COTTON GROWING IN MY PATCH

â„“ GOT THAT OLD HEN SETTIN'

â„“ WAITIN' FOR THAT OLD HEN
TO HATCH â„“

â„“ DEE YODEL-A-HEE-OH-LAY-HEE

â„“ OH-LAY-HEE

PICK THAT THING, BOY.

NARRATOR: BY 1932,

JIMMIE RODGERS
WAS MORE POPULAR THAN EVER.

HARD-UP FARMERS WERE SAID
TO COME TO TOWN AND TELL

STOREKEEPERS, "GIVE ME A SACK
OF FLOUR, A SLAB OF BACON,

AND THE LATEST
JIMMIE RODGERS RECORD."

FANS WROTE HIM LETTERS
AS IF ALL HIS SONGS WERE

TRUE STORIES FROM HIS LIFE.

THEY ASKED HIM WHY HE
HAD WANTED TO SHOOT POOR THELMA,

ABOUT HIS TIME IN
THE JAILHOUSE

OR OUT ON THE OPEN RANGE,

EVEN CASTIGATED CARRIE
ON THE BELIEF SHE HAD LOVED

ANOTHER MAN WHILE HE SERVED
AS A BRAKEMAN RIDING THE RAILS.

"THEY PROVED THE SINCERITY THAT
WAS IN HIS VOICE AS HE SANG,"

HIS WIFE RECALLED.

"HE'D HAD TROUBLES.
HE'D SUFFERED.

THOSE TRUTHS WERE
IN HIS SONGS."

WITH THE FAMOUS HUMORIST
WILL ROGERS, HE MADE A TOUR

ON BEHALF OF VICTIMS OF THE
DEPRESSION AND THE DUST BOWL.

THEIR APPEARANCES
RAISED \$300,000

IN MUCH-NEEDED RELIEF.

BUT THE DEEPENING
ECONOMIC CRISIS

AFFECTED JIMMIE RODGERS, TOO.

"YOU'RE STILL AT
THE TOP OF THE HEAP,"

RALPH PEER ASSURED HIM,
"BUT THE HEAP ISN'T SO BIG."

["MULE SKINNER BLUES" PLAYING]

NARRATOR: TO HELP PAY
HIS BILLS, RODGERS

KEPT ON TOURING DESPITE
HIS WORSENING HEALTH.

RODGERS:
â„¤ GOOD MORNING, CAPTAIN

â„¤ GOOD MORNING,
SHINE... â„¤

NARRATOR: HE SEEMED TO DRAW

STRENGTH FROM HIS AUDIENCES,

EVEN IF THEY WERE
NOW IN SMALLER VENUES.

HE WOULD STOP IN THE CENTER OF
A TOWN AND PLAY FOR FREE,

GAINING THE PUBLICITY
HE WANTED

FOR THAT NIGHT'S
PAID PERFORMANCE,

THEN MOVE ON THE NEXT DAY.

EVERWHERE RODGERS WENT,
LEGENDS GREW UP.

A BLIND NEWSBOY IN McALESTER
WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN GIVEN

A NEW GUITAR;

A WIDOW IN ANOTHER TOWN
WAS SAID TO HAVE HAD

HER MORTGAGE PAID OFF.

SOMETIMES HE LIKED
TO INVITE PRETTY WOMEN

TO RIDE AROUND TOWN
WITH HIM IN HIS SHINY CAR.

AFTER A STOP IN O'DONNELL,
TEXAS, PEOPLE SAID HE LEFT

TWO DIVORCES AND THREE
SEPARATIONS IN HIS WAKE.

AND EVERYWHERE HE WENT,

HIS MUSIC RESONATED,

ESPECIALLY "MULE SKINNER BLUES."

HAGGARD: "MULE SKINNER BLUES,"
HIS DELIVERY ON IT

WAS SO TREMENDOUS.

I DON'T KNOW. IT JUST--

IT ROLLS WITH THE FLOW.

IT STARTS OUT WITH A BANG

AND ENDS UP WITH A BANG.

AND IT HAS SOMETHING
TO SAY, AND IT'S ENTERTAINING.

â€œ GOOD MORNING, CAPTAIN

â€œ GOOD MORNING,
SHINE â€œ

â€œ YEAH

â€œ DO YOU NEED ANOTHER
MULE SKINNER â€œ

â€œ OUT ON YOUR NEW MUD LINE?

IT'S JUST GOOD.

[CHUCKLES]

NARRATOR:
THE BANK ROBBER BONNIE PARKER

IN THE MIDST OF A CRIME SPREE

WITH HER LOVER,
CLYDE BARROW,

SPENT SOME OF THEIR STOLEN MONEY

TO BUY EVERY ONE
OF RODGERS' RECORDS.

IN BROWNWOOD, TEXAS,
A YOUNG ERNEST TUBB REMEMBERED

PEOPLE LINING UP FOR BLOCKS
TO SEE HIM IN PERSON,

PAYING A DOLLAR
AND FILLING A LOCAL THEATER

THAT HAD TROUBLE
GETTING HALF THAT CROWD

FOR A MOVIE COSTING A DIME.

BUT IT ALL CAME AT A COST.

HE TRAVELED NOW
WITH BAGS FULL OF MEDICINE,

WHOSE SMELL HE MASKED

WITH HIS BLACK NARCISSUS PERFUME

AND INCREASING DOSES OF MORPHINE
HE TOOK WITH SHOTS OF WHISKY

TO COMBAT THE PAIN
THAT RACKED HIS CHEST

WITH PROLONGED FITS OF COUGHING
THAT BROUGHT UP BLOODY SPITTLE.

HE COLLAPSED FROM
EXHAUSTION MORE FREQUENTLY,

HAD NIGHT SWEATS THAT KEPT
HIM FROM SLEEPING.

RODGERS MADE NO SECRET
OF THE DISEASE

THAT WAS KILLING HIM

OR HOW HE INTENDED
TO RESPOND TO IT.

"I'M NOT GOING TO LAY
IN ONE OF THESE HOSPITAL ROOMS

AND COUNT THE FLY SPECKS
ON THE WALL," HE TOLD PEOPLE.

"I WANT TO DIE
WITH MY SHOES ON."

WOMAN, AS CARRIE RODGERS: I NOW
CAME TO REALIZE THE AWFUL IMPORT

OF THOSE TWO SIMPLE
WORDS "WASTING AWAY,"

AND I ASKED MYSELF FRANTICALLY,

HOW LONG? A MONTH? TWO?
A YEAR?

NARRATOR: RODGERS CONVINCED
A PRISONER

IN A TEXAS PENITENTIARY
TO WRITE HIM

A SONG ABOUT HIS
TUBERCULOSIS, "TB BLUES,"

TO WHICH HE ADDED
A FINAL STANZA:

"GEE, BUT THE GRAVEYARD
IS A LONESOME PLACE.

"THEY PUT YOU ON YOUR BACK,

THROW THAT MUD DOWN
IN YOUR FACE."

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF OTHER
AMERICANS HAD TUBERCULOSIS, TOO.

"LUNGERS" THEY WERE CALLED,

AND MANY FAMILIES
HAD BEEN TOUCHED BY THE DISEASE
IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.

JIMMIE RODGERS:
â€œ GEE, BUT THE GRAVEYARD

â€œ IS A LONESOME PLACE...

NARRATOR: AT ONE PERFORMANCE,
A PERSON IN THE AUDIENCE

SHOUTED OUT
SOME ENCOURAGEMENT.

"SPIT 'ER UP, JIMMIE,"
HE SAID, "AND SING SOME MORE."

RODGERS:
â€œ THEY PUT YOU ON YOUR BACK

â€œ THROW THAT MUD DOWN
IN YOUR FACE... â€œ

WOMAN, AS CARRIE RODGERS: TO THE
LUNGERS, IT WAS A GREATER TONIC

THAN ANY PHYSICIAN
HAD BEEN ABLE TO PRESCRIBE.

IT WAS THEIR OWN LANGUAGE.

SO THEY CHUCKLED,
"OLD BOY JIMMIE. HE KNOWS!"

AND THEIR
CHUCKLES WERE GOOD MEDICINE.

[BOAT HORN BLOWING]

NARRATOR: ON MAY 14, 1933,
RODGERS ARRIVED IN NEW YORK CITY

AND CHECKED INTO THE SAME HOTEL
NEAR TIMES SQUARE

WHERE HE HAD STAYED BACK
IN 1927,

WHEN HE WAS
A COMPLETE UNKNOWN.

AS ALWAYS, HE WAS
WORRIED ABOUT MONEY

AND WANTED TO GO BACK
INTO THE STUDIO.

RALPH PEER WAS SHOCKED
AT HIS APPEARANCE

AND INSISTED HE REST A FEW DAYS

BEFORE STARTING
HIS RECORDING SESSION.

ON MAY 17th
IN THE VICTOR STUDIO,

HE BEGAN THE WAY HE HAD
STARTED HIS RECORDING CAREER--

JUST HIMSELF AND HIS GUITAR.

RODGERS: â„“ I'VE BEEN AWAY
JUST A YEAR TODAY â„“

â„“ BUT SOON I WILL CEASE
TO ROAM... â„“

NARRATOR:
IN TWO LONG, DIFFICULT DAYS,

HE LAID DOWN SIX SONGS.

RODGERS: â„“ ...DOING NO HARM

â„“ I'M YODELING MY WAY
BACK HOME... â„“

NARRATOR: THE TUBERCULOSIS
WAS SHREDDING HIS LUNGS,

AND HE WAS HEAVILY SEDATED
FOR THE PAIN,

SIPPING WHISKEY TO CLEAR
HIS THROAT BETWEEN TAKES.

THE ENGINEERS HAD TO CARRY
HIM TO HIS CAB

AFTER THE SECOND AFTERNOON,
AND HE RESTED FOR TWO DAYS
BEFORE RETURNING TO RECORD
TWO MORE SONGS,
PROPPED UP BY PILLOWS
IN AN EASY CHAIR
IN FRONT OF THE MICROPHONE.

ON MAY 24th, HE FELT
STRONG ENOUGH TO STAND
AT THE MICROPHONE
AND PERFORMED FOUR SONGS,
RESTING ON A COT
IN THE REHEARSAL ROOM
BETWEEN EACH TAKE.

RODGERS: â„¢ SOON I'LL BE BACK
IN MY OLD MAMMY'S SHACK â„¢
â„¢ YODELING FOR HER
THIS OLD TUNE... â„¢

NARRATOR: WITH THE SESSION OVER,
RODGERS FELT REINVIGORATED.

HE TOOK IN
CONEY ISLAND THE NEXT DAY,
HAD HOT DOGS FOR LUNCH,
DRANK A GLASS OF
NEWLY LEGALIZED 3.2 BEER,
AND NAPPED IN THE SUN.

[RODGERS YODELING]

NARRATOR: BUT THAT NIGHT,
BACK AT HIS HOTEL,
FITS OF COUGHING SWEPT
THROUGH HIM,
AND HE BEGAN HEMORRHAGING
BRIGHT RED SPOTS
ONTO HIS PILLOWS.

NARRATOR: EARLY IN THE MORNING
OF MAY 26, 1933,

JIMMIE RODGERS DIED,
DROWNING IN HIS OWN BLOOD.

HE WAS ONLY 35 YEARS OLD.

[RODGERS PLAYING "MISS
THE MISSISSIPPI AND YOU"]

â„“a

RODGERS:
â„“a I'M GROWING TIRED

â„“a OF THE BIG CITY'S LIGHTS

â„“a TIRED OF THE GLAMOUR

â„“a AND TIRED OF THE SIGHTS

â„“a IN ALL MY DREAMS

â„“a I AM ROAMING ONCE MORE

â„“a BACK TO MY HOME

â„“a ON THE OLD RIVER SHORE

â„“a I AM SAD AND WEARY...

NARRATOR: THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY
ADDED A SPECIAL BAGGAGE CAR

TO ITS NEW ORLEANS RUN

TO CARRY
THE SINGING BRAKEMAN HOME.

HIS PEARL-GRAY CASKET,
COVERED WITH LILIES

RESTED ON A PLATFORM
IN ITS CENTER,

WITH A PHOTOGRAPH OF RODGERS

DRESSED IN HIS RAILROAD
UNIFORM, TWO THUMBS UP--

THE BRAKEMAN'S SIGNAL THAT
EVERYTHING WAS READY TO MOVE ON.

BIG CITY NEWSPAPERS
IN THE EAST

MADE ONLY PASSING REFERENCE
TO RODGERS' DEATH,

BUT IN SMALL TOWNS THROUGHOUT
THE SOUTH AND SOUTHWEST,

IT DOMINATED THE FRONT PAGES.

SOLEMN CROWDS
GATHERED ALONG THE TRACKS

TO PAY THEIR RESPECTS
AS THE TRAIN MADE ITS WAY

TOWARD MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI.

AFTER A FUNERAL AT
THE CENTRAL METHODIST CHURCH,

HE WAS BURIED
IN THE OAK GROVE CEMETERY,

BESIDE THE DAUGHTER
WHO HAD DIED IN INFANCY.

HIS CAREER HAD LASTED
LESS THAN 6 YEARS,

BUT IN THAT TIME,

JIMMIE RODGERS HAD RECORDED
MORE THAN 100 SONGS,

MANY OF WHICH WOULD
BE RE-RECORDED FOR GENERATIONS

BY OTHER ARTISTS AS PROOF

THAT THEY WERE STAYING TRUE
TO THE MUSIC'S ROOTS.

MAN: JIMMIE RODGERS
STARTED IT ALL.

WITHOUT JIMMIE RODGERS,
THERE WOULD BE NO BOB WILLS.

WITHOUT JIMMIE RODGERS,
THERE WOULD BE

NO HANK WILLIAMS.

WITHOUT JIMMIE RODGERS,
THERE WOULD--WHO KNOWS?

HE WAS IT.

HIS SONGS NEVER GO AWAY,

GENERATION AFTER GENERATION.

BOB DYLAN HAS RECORDED THEM;
WAYLON RECORDED THEM.

JOHNNY CASH RECORDED THEM...

DOLLY PARTON.

EVERYBODY THAT IS ANYBODY HAS
RECORDED A JIMMIE RODGERS SONG.

THE SONGS KEEP COMING AT YOU.

RODGERS:
â„“ THE MISSISSIPPI AND YOU...

HAGGARD: HE SET THE PACE
FOR PEOPLE LIKE ERNEST TUBB

AND PEOPLE
LIKE HANK WILLIAMS,

PEOPLE LIKE ME,

AND, UH, JUST
A WHOLE BIG SECTION

OF COUNTRY MUSIC
WOULDN'T BE HERE

IF IT HADN'T BEEN
FOR JIMMIE RODGERS.

RODGERS:
â„“ THE MISSISSIPPI AND YOU...

NARRATOR:
IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED,

THE MUSIC THAT JIMMIE RODGERS,
THE CARTER FAMILY,

AND OTHERS HAD MADE
WOULD CONTINUE TO EVOLVE,

CONTINUE TO WELCOME
NEW MUSICIANS AND STYLES,

CONTINUE TO GROW AS AN INDUSTRY,

AND CONTINUE TO REFLECT
THE EXPERIENCES

OF EVERYDAY AMERICANS,

ESPECIALLY DURING

THE HARD TIMES AHEAD.

[RODGERS YODELING]

â  a MISSISSIPPI

â  a AND YOU

[DOLLY PARTON SINGING
"MULE SKINNER BLUES"]

â  a WELL, GOOD MORNING

â  a CAPTAIN

â  a GOOD MORNING TO YOU, SIR

â  a HEY, HEY

â  a YEAH

â  a DO YOU NEED
ANOTHER MULE SKINNER â  a

â  a DOWN ON YOUR NEW MUD RUN?

â  a HEY, HEY

â  a YEAH

â  a YODEL-A-HEE

â  a HEE-HEE

â  a HEE-HEE-HEE-HEE-HEE-HEE

[WHISTLES]

[WHIP CRACKS]

â  a WELL, I'M A LADY
MULE SKINNER â  a

â  a FROM DOWN OLD TENNESSEE WAY

â  a HEY, HEY

NARRATOR: NEXT TIME
ON "COUNTRY MUSIC"...

MAN: I THINK HARD TIMES
AND COUNTRY MUSIC WERE BORN
FOR EACH OTHER.

NARRATOR: A TROUBLED NATION
TURNS TO THE RADIO...

MAN 2: THE MUSIC JUST PROVIDED
ENCOURAGEMENT TO PEOPLE

TO GAIN ASSURANCE FOR
A BRIGHTER DAY BEYOND
THIS WORLD.

NARRATOR: BOB WILLS
SHAKES UP THE STAGE...

MAN 3: BOB WILLS WAS
LIKE ELVIS PRESLEY.
HE WAS OUTRAGEOUS.

NARRATOR: AND THE WAR BRINGS
A NEW AUDIENCE TO COUNTRY.

MAN 4: WORLD WAR II
NATIONALIZED COUNTRY MUSIC.

NARRATOR: WHEN "COUNTRY MUSIC"
CONTINUES.

[FIDDLE PLAYING COUNTRY MUSIC]

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â„¢ HEE-HEE

â„¢ HEE-HEE-HEE-HEE-HEE-HEE

[WHISTLES, WHIP CRACKS]

WHOO!

â a WELL, I'VE BEEN WORKING
DOWN IN GEORGIA â a

â a AT A GREASY SPOON CAFE

â a HEY

â a I'VE BEEN WORKING IN GEORGIA

â a JUST TO LET A NO-GOOD MAN

â a CALL EVERY CENT OF MY PAY

â a HEY, HEY

â a AND I'M SICK OF IT,
I WANT TO BE A MULE SKINNER â a

â a YODEL-A-EE

â a HEE-HEE

â a HEE-HEE-HEE-HEE-HEE-HEE

â a MULE SKINNER BLUES

[WHISTLES]

HYAH! HYAH...